■ ENTERTAINMENT/A2-1 ■ ACROSS/A15
How to seat 1,000 guests, including Hollywood A-listers, at the Globes

Cebu journalist's killer convicted, sentenced to death

■ NEWS/A2
GMA promises P13-B pay hike for gov't employees

■ METRO/A17
Greenhills shopping center illegally extracting water from aquifer, says NWRB

Fil-Am spy, ex-Ping aide: Patriots or conspirators?

NEWARK, NEW JERSEY—AN EX-AIDE OF SEN. Panfilo Lacson, a former police officer who is accused of wanting to oust former the administration of President Macapagal-Arroyo, is "still a patriot" guilty only of voicing a political opinion, according to his lawyer.

"There was no conspiracy," Mark Bennett, lawyer of former Senior Supt. Michael Ray Aquino, said in an interview on Wednesday after

FILIPINO SPY, A3

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'Brokeback' breaks taboo for gay cowboys on the range

CHARLEY, ARIZONA—Many gay cowboys are grateful that award-winning "Brokeback Mountain" has broken a sexual taboo. Though set all over, living away in the American West.

About 100 gay cowboys

BROKEBACK, A8

THE BIG STAR at the hearing turns out to be the comely Marinella Santos. Other resource persons, from left, are Michael Angelo Zuno, Commodore Rex Robles (ret.), ex-Sen. Honasan and ex-Nica chief Gen. Cardoso (ret.).

Senate probe reveals massive Isafp wiretapping of GMA foes

By TJ Burgonio

THE VOICES ON THE TAPES were hardly recognizable and the conversations uninteresting.

But when played at the Senate yesterday, the two tapes, dubbed "children" of the widely popular "Hello Garci tape," revealed the extensive wiretapping of opposition personalities shortly before the May 2004 elections. And the fingerprints of the Intelligence Service of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (Isafp) appeared to be all over it.

Some of the voices caught in the recordings were those of retired Navy Commodore Rex Robles, Mika Dandoy, secretary of former Sen. Gregorio Honasan, retired Maj. Gen. Rodolfo Garakan, a supporter of opposition presidential candidate Sen. Panfilo Lacson, and Michael Angelo Zuno, a former Malacañang operative.

They appeared at the resumption of a Senate inquiry into the wiretapping to listen to the tapes and identify their voices.

Honasan was identified with Fernando Poe Jr., another candidate in the May 2004 presidential election.

The wiretaps were carried out from January to June 2004 during the presidential election period.

Robles said his voice was taped when he tried to call Sen. Aquilino Pimentel Jr. but mistakenly dialed Honasan's number. Robles and Honasan were with Karlo's staff when the latter was defense minister during the Marcos presidency.

The damning testimony however, came from Marinella Santos, who named the announcers on the recordings as Isafp agents who included her boyfriend, Tsgt. Vicki Doble.

Santos was quick to identify most of those who announced the conver-

SENATE, A4

Escape part of bigger plot

Clandestine group claims 7 officers helped Magdalo 4 flee

A puzzle: Intel head lets Trillanes talk on GMA ouster

By Dona Pazzibugan and Tarra V. Quismundo

IF THE CHIEF OF THE MILitary's intelligence unit was around while a prominent rebel officer called for President Macapagal-Arroyo's ouster, how long could the military remain neutral?

Brig. Gen. Marlu Quevedo, chief of the Intelligence Service of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (Isafp), was nearby when Magdalo Group leader Navy Lt. Antonio Trillanes IV met with the media after a hearing at the Makati Regional Trial Court on Tuesday.

Most reporters and curiously all the cameramen who were listening to Trillanes was giving an interview would not have recognized Quevedo, who has a talent for being inconspicuous in a crowd.

But a couple of reporters did recognize him and saw him just outside the Makati RTC building as Trillanes and other marinemen

A PUZZLE, A4

By Dona Pazzibugan and Luigo A. del Puerta

THE "MAGDALO 4" had outside help and their escape appeared increasingly to be part of a bigger plot to finally accomplish what they failed to do at Oakwood in 2003.

A clandestine group in the military, the Young Officers Union (new generation) (YOU(ng)), said it facilitated the escape of Capt. Nathaniel Rabonza and 1st Lieutenants Lawrence San Juan, Sonny Sorsolutin and Patricio Bumidang from Fort Bonifacio on Tuesday night.

YOU(ng) said seven junior officers—two from the Air Force, two from the Navy and three from the Army—helped the four leave their cells at 8:42 p.m. and flee in four vehicles.

"They went out of the camp by 9 p.m.," the time the Army said it discovered the four were missing, said the YOU(ng) statement signed by a Lt. Col. Artemio Alcantara,

ESCAPE, A4

OVER HILL AND DALE in the remote mud-packed village of Ugong Buhangin, Baliuag, a US honor guard carries the coffin of Army Sgt. Marvin Bosa to her final resting place. The US contingent was led by Brig. Gen. Gregory Schumacher who awarded 3 military medals to the Filipino-American soldier. Town mates (above) of the hero swell with affection and pride. (Story on Page 4/6.)

Morales says he's too good for Pacquiao

By Recah Trinidad

LAS VEGAS—BERT MORALES, future Hall of Fame inductee, apologized to the Filipino people yesterday.

Sorry, he said, but there's nothing he could do about it. He's coming in twice as sharp and prepared as he was last year.

In short, he will be just too good for Manny Pacquiao.

"The job will be there, no matter what they say they would do, only it would be twice as quick," Morales, bright-eyed, ruddy of cheek, explained through an interpreter at the tailend of yesterday's press preview for his Jan. 21 rematch against Manny Pacquiao of the Philippines.

Unlike last year, when he met the foreign media sporting a thick jacket, looking weak and frail, Morales showed up in a plain woolen sweatshirt appearing

MORALES, A8

IN THIS CORNER: At the press conference in Las Vegas, Manny Pacquiao and Eric Morales of Mexico are all smiles.

Congress oversight body calls for end to VFA in six months

By Philip C. Tubeza and Volt Contreras

THE LEGISLATIVE OVERSIGHT Committee on the RP-US Visiting Forces Agreement (Lovfa) yesterday passed a concurrent resolution calling for the termination and renegotiation of the controversial treaty.

It also called for a stop to joint military exercises for the duration of the trial of the four US Marines charged with raping a Filipina woman on Nov. 1, 2005.

"The committee has just voted in favor of the resolution expressing the sense of Congress that a notice of termination should be served upon the US Embassy in order that, during the intervening six-month period provided for by the VFA, the Philippine and American governments can renegotiate a new [treaty] where the question of custody hopefully will no longer be problematic," said Sen. Miriam Defensor Santiago, who co-chairs the Lovfa with Cebu Rep. Antonio Cuenco.

CONGRESS, A4

Never again, says girl holding Bible at GMA's oath-taking

By Fe Zamora

WHO WAS THAT LITTLE GIRL?

No, not Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, then Vice President who was taking her oath as President at the Edsa Shrine exactly five years ago today, but that girl who was holding up the Bible.

Cecilia Paz Bautista Abad had earned herself a place in history.

Then 11 years old, she was the young girl flanked by Mr Arroyo and Chief Justice Hilario Davide, who administered the oath of office during the hastily prepared ceremony. (See photo on Page A6.)

But the youngest daughter of resigned Education Secretary

NEVER, A6

WEATHER FORECAST

TODAY: Hot, Heavy and Humid with hot south Quezon and scattered rainshower and some thunderstorm. Hot all in Central Luzon and over Cotabato. The rest of the country will have partly cloudy to cloudy skies.

source: PAGASA

Second FRONTPAGE

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GMA vows ₱13B for gov't pay raise

WITH THE belfry of the Quiapo Church in the background, President Arroyo receives a point in her speech before the Liberal Party at the Plaza Miranda. STORY

PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-ARROYO YESTERDAY promised to get Congress to approve a P13 billion wage hike package for government employees, including military personnel, before Valentine's Day amid growing dissatisfaction with her administration and renewed restiveness among the junior officers of the Armed Forces.

Speaking at the 60th anniversary celebrations of the Liberal Party at Plaza Miranda yesterday, the President said the generous emoluments package for governmental reorganization was part of her efforts to bring the benefits of her economic reform program to the masses.

Budget Secretary Romulo Neri said a P13 billion compensation package was already included in the 2006 budget that has yet to be approved by Congress.

He explained that the President was referring to a new bill that has been filed to ensure that the compensation package would be implemented in case there would be a delay in the approval of the 2006 budget.

The compensation package is to be funded by the revenues expected from the new tax reforms, like the anticipated increase in the onsale added tax rate from 10 percent to 11 percent next month.

Neri said the government has allocated P1.3 billion in the 2006 budget to fund the increases of more than one million government employees, including over 100,000 soldiers, by 6 percent, or a minimum of P500 each.

Government employees groups have criticized the proposed wage hike as inadequate, pointing out that they have been ahead of spiraling energy increases for the past four years.

The President also promised that "more benefits were coming to give all Filipino families a chance to increase their standard of living."

"I hope that in the days of hearty, government employees will be happy with the benefits offered by the government," Mr. Arroyo said. Gil C. Cabunegas Jr. with a report from Christine Avendaño

Noli still tops in new SWS poll

By Gil C. Cabunegas Jr.

GIL CASTRO

VICE PRESIDENT NOLI DE CASTRO AND Senate President Franklin Drilon, the oft-cited rival to him in the presidency, garnered the highest ratings in the latest survey on public satisfaction with government officials taken amid confounding calls for President Macapagal-Arroyo to resign.

The Social Weather Station survey conducted between Nov. 27 and Dec. 4, 2005, showed De Castro received a net satisfaction rating of 34 percent (58 percent satisfied less 24 percent dissatisfied) in the nationwide poll that covered 1,200 respondents.

Though slightly lower than the 46 percent net satisfaction rating he received last August, De Castro remained the most esteemed official in the highest echelons of government.

De Castro's rating was in stark contrast to President Arroyo's numbers, however.

Mrs. Arroyo had a net satisfaction rating of minus 33 percent for the same period (24 percent satisfied less 54 percent dissatisfied).

Next season?

On the other hand, Drilon, who could be the most vocal of Malacañang should both the President and De Castro based opposition rally to step down, had a net satisfaction rating of 24 percent (41 percent satisfied less 25 percent dissatisfied).

Respondents gave Drilon high marks even though his standing of a plurality group in the Liberal Party that called for Mr. Arroyo to resign has not borne results.

Speaker Jose de Venecia was another latest-star player. He received a net satisfaction rating (37 percent satisfied and 37 percent dissatisfied) on his positions on issues and controversies appearing to enjoy an equal share of supporters and detractors.

Both the House and Senate were there net rated positively, although their ratings remained in the positive columns. The Senate had a net satisfaction rating of 14 percent (down from 20 percent in September), while the House had a rating of 7 percent (down from 12 percent). Both chambers were ousted in political battles over Mr. Arroyo's continued woes in office during the last six months of 2005.

Warm send-off

The respondents, however, gave a warm send-off to recently retired Chief Justice Hilario Davide Jr. who notched an 11-percent net satisfaction rating (42 percent satisfied less 31 percent dissatisfied). The Davide-led Supreme Court chalked up the highest marks among key government institutions with a net satisfaction rating of 22 percent.

Public for President Arroyo boiled over the recommended cabinet shake-up, with seven getting a net satisfaction rating of minus 15 percent, down further from the 11 percent in September, and her Cabinet holding steady with a net satisfaction rating of minus 6 percent, the same as in September.

The SWS conducted face-to-face interviews of 1,200 adults comprising random samples of 300 each in Metro Manila, the rest of Luzon, the Visayas and Mindanao.

In a press statement, De Castro expressed his gratitude to the people for the high satisfaction rating.

"I value very much the trust reposed in me by the Filipino people and assure them that I would always aim to protect their rights and work hard to be continuously deserving of the people's confidence," he said.

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It's Comelec's turn to cry 'dagdag-bawas'

By Jaymee Anog

HOW IT'S THE COMMISSION ON ELECTIONS' turn to answer its critics of "dagdag-bawas," or vote-padding and vote-shaving.

Comelec yesterday questioned the petitioners of the signatures in the online petition calling for the resignation of top Comelec officials involved in the $1.3-billion computerization deal that the Supreme Court nullified in 2004 due to padding irregularities.

The petition, posted last July 27 by Augusto Lagman, former president of the Information Technology Association of the Philippines, has already gathered almost 900 signatures.

Lagman belongs to the Philippines Coalition Against Corruption and the Black and White Movement, which have been demanding the resignations and prosecution of Comelec chair Benjamin Abalos Sr. and Commissioners Resurreccion Borra, Mehol Sadain, Rufino Javier and Florentino Tuason Jr.

"It does look as if the petitioners got their figures [posted by Lagman] with a different entry," Comelec said in a statement, claiming that some of the signatures were duplicates and that some of those who had signed were actually disapproved of the petition.

For anyone to "sign" the petition (http://www.petitiononline.com/votepwe/petition.html), he or she just needs to fill in a form, indicating his or her name and e-mail address, which are required, and comments, address and cellphone number, which are optional.

The signer has the option of keeping his e-mail address private, disclosed to the public or disclosed only to the petition author.

Comelec said the same requirement was meaningless since the petition did not distinguish between real and fictional names, including the names of cartoon characters which gave the petition a "cartoonish outcome."

"In fact, with enough time and imagination, a person can have as many different e-mail addresses as he wants, and therefore can sign the petition more than once," Comelec added. "And since the petition is on-line and available to anyone worldwide, and there is no way to verify the signatory's nationality, a person interested in the Philippines, or even more comely, pretend to be an overseas Filipino worker."

Comelec pointed out that the petition could not even distinguish between signatories that were for or against it.

Court clears Caltex in '87 sea tragedy

By Armando N. Roscom

THE COURT OF APPEALS has absolved Caltex Phil. of any liability for the 1987 MV Doña Paz sea tragedy, the world's worst peacetime marine disaster.

The appellate court upheld a 1997 Makati court decision that dismissed claims against the oil company by Sulpicio Lines, the operators of the Doña Paz.

The Doña Paz was headed for Tacloban City when it was rammed in the dead of night by the Vector, a small oil tanker hired by Caltex. The vessel sank with the loss of about 4,000 lives off the coast of Mindoro a few days before Christmas on Dec. 20, 1987.

In a 17-page decision penned by Associate Justice Rodrigo Cosico, the appellate court said Caltex was not liable for the "negligence" of the captain of the Vector.

Caltex was thus excluded from the responsibility of compensating the victims' kin and of payment for lost cargo being sought by Sulpicio Lines and its insurer, Prudential Guarantee Assurance, from the Vector Shipping Corp., the vessel's owners.

Caltex wrote that it was settled in Philippine jurisprudence that the charterer of a ship only has "the right to inspect the ports or places at which the vessel shall call or enter but ... has no jurisdiction or control over the acts of the captain."

The charterer was "not liable for the damages due to negligence of the latter in handling the ship," the judge added.

With a report from AFP

Junking of impeach rap final

THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES' decision to scrap the proposed impeachment complaint against President Macapagal-Arroyo was "Final," Senate Majority Leader Francisco Tatad said.

He declared yesterday:

"It's totally defective. We can't do anything about it," said Tatad, referring to the complaint crafted by lawyer Oliver Lozano.

Lozano "can always question the House rules anywhere he likes but that's our stand," Nograles added.

"The impeachment complaint is attributed to vacuity of purpose."

Like Nograles, Speaker Jose de Venecia said Lozano's hasty filing violated the constitutional ban on the filing of more than one impeachment complaint against the same official within a year. The ban on the filing of a new complaint against Mr. Arroyo expires in July. Michael Lim Ubac

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Doble's girl claims seeing wiretapping gear at Isafp 'blue room'

By TJ Burgonio

BE NOW THE INTELLIGENCE service of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (Isafp) must have realized it committed a terrible mistake in June 2004 when it allowed evidence to body roam its premises—one of the most restricted areas in the country.

The girlfriend of Isafp T/Sgt. Vidal Doble yesterday testified at the Senate that she saw a mobile phone interceptor during one of her forays into the "blue room" at the agency's Mig 21 compound.

Marlene Garcia testimony at the Senate inquiry into the "Hello Garci" tape scandal contradicted the Isafp's insistence declaration that it had no capability to conducting wiretaps.

"I'm positive I've seen such equipment," she said when she was shown a brochure of a Cellular Interceptor 4200 Digital unit and asked by Sen. Juan Ponce Enrile if she had seen one at Isafp.

"I'll always manage to escape from my escorts and get in. I was the persistent type," she chuckled when asked how sure she was about it.

The 25-year-old fiancee had answered in and out of the Isafp compound and had managed to get inside the Mig 21 blue room, a classified area where only officers and cleared people are allowed.

She made her forays into the room while Doble was the duty officer and during their secret trysting stay at the Isafp compound when the wiretapping scandal broke out.

Doble until he cellular intercept, estimated to cost $400,000, was available to government agencies only.

Retired Maj. Gen. Rodolfo Garcia, former chief of the National Intelligence Coordinating Agency who appeared as a witness, doubted if an agency, Mig 21 or the Isafp had the means to purchase such "expensive equipment."

When asked if the Armed Forces had the money to buy a unit, he said: "Yes." He said it was possible the government could have procured the interceptor, assuming that it needed the cooperation of service providers to operate it.

"The equipment to enable interception of cellular calls will require what is called a target number and you have been secretary of defense. I think that you know ..." he said, addressing Enrile.

Senate probe reveals massive Isafp wiretapping of GMA foes

From page A1

system in the two tapes, noting they were members of the Isafp Military Intelligence Group 21.

She identified them as T/Sgt. Ed Tando, a certain Reyes Ben, one M/Sgt. Bellido, T/Sgt. Allan Hindo, and the one by their code names, 211, 215, 219 and 213, and Vidal, her boyfriend, among others.

She managed to say that 212 was the code of a certain Sgt. and 213, a Subong.

"I've been with him for a long time," she said when asked how much she was that it was Doble who had answered a certain contention.

She recognize the voice of the one because she had talked to them in person or by phone, recalling that it was they who usually picked up the phone whenever she called Doble or Isafp.

She recalled personnel from photos taken during an outing with some Isafp agency. She identified each one in the photos, including Doble, T/Sgt. Bellido, T/Sgt. Ibasa, T/Sgt. Abando, Sgt. Velasco and one Pfizzal.

In December last year, Garcia testified at the Senate that she barely roamed in and out of the Isafp blue room in June 2004 where a 14-man team of the agency's Mig 21 allegedly conducted the wiretapping.

"The direction is pointing to that," Sen. Rodolfo Biazon, chair of the investigating committee on national defense, told reporters when asked if it could be concluded from Garcia' testimony that it was Isafp which had carried out the wiretapping.

The two tapes were surreptitiously by lawyer Samuel Dog, who surfaced last June claiming that he had the master copy of the wiretaps. He could not account the inquiry because he faces arrest on charges of kidnapping and illegal detention, said Sen. Rodolfo Biazon, chair of the committee conducting the inquiry.

A former deputy director of the National Bureau of Investigation, Dog had earlier said that he had received the tapes from Doble for P1 million.

Isafp has deteriorated

The recordings included conversations between President Macapagal-Arroyo and former Election Commissioner Virgilio Garcillano allegedly showing that she rigged the 2004 balloting...a charge she has vehemently denied. Disclosures in Hello Garci tapes led to an impeachment attempt against his downfall, which has fallen in the House killed in September.

Robles, Enrile and Biazon shared the view that the military mandated to be apolitical, but engaged in partisan politics.

"So excited to the tapes or the recordings. The more I feel that we have an intelligence agency that has deteriorated probably beyond repair," Robles said.

"And my heart bleeds for it because I had been with the Isafp for some time, and we had successful presidential ... wiretapping), which have been lost."

Biazon agreed with Robles. "I would like to raise the alarm about something that is developing ... the deterioration of a very sensitive agency of government," he said.

Disastrous and tragic

"It is grossly unfair ...to fact, I think it is criminal—for civilian authority or politicians to inflict this on an institution that is mandated to be apolitical ... Soldiers are our praetorian guards of any individual or group," he said.

"The armed forces is the only

Excerpts of Honasan phone tap

Some excerpts of the conversation of one tape were:

Voice 1: Hello, good afternoon.

Voice 2: Yes, sir.

V1: Si Commodore Robles ito (gang nagdeal ay pang Presidente lang nasiyempi)

V2: Yes sir.

V1: Hey Senator Enrile

V2: Oye

V1: How for?

V2: Sir, nakitapo lang ako Any Boy.

V1: Pinka ejan dyan?

V2: Wala ho. Sa office po ito si Senator Honasan.

V1: Isan ba lang office na iyo? Office ni Senator Honasan?

V2: Oye.

Robles, looking smart in a dark maroon suit, admitted that the first voice was his and explained that he was actually trying to reach Enrile's office to see a meeting, but got the wrong number.

"It is my voice. I remember the conversation clearly. From the sound, it's very clear. It's my first and only time to call Senator Honasan's office. I didn't even know that it was his office. I thought it was the number of Senator Enrile whom I wanted to contact at the time," he said.

Dumlao also admitted that the other voice was his.

Their conversation was recorded at 4:33 p.m. on Feb. 13, 2004.

Dumlao confirmed her voice in the tape was that of a conversation rapped from January to February 2006, but clarified that it was not her voice in the other conversations. She could not recall all the people she had talked to, except for Robles.

Canlesa and son

The second tape was also played, here are some excerpts:

V1: Hello.

V2: Isang

V1: o?

V2: Kumagitvite si Daddy.

V1: May text na rin ba dyan sa pera ni Senator?

V2: Oo.

V1: Mayroon?

V2: Oo.

The conversation was recorded at 7:34 a.m. on May 8, 2006.

Former chief of the National Intelligence Coordinating Agency retired General Cesario Canlesa, 81 said that one voice was his and the other was that of his son, Ali Ben Rakib Canlesa, who failed to attend the hearing due to a prior commitment.

The elder Canlesa explained that he worked for Soldiers for Peace and Progress, an organization formed by retired military volunteers to protect Lacson's vote, while his son worked for the campaign of Lacson's wife. Most of the time, the son exercised the retired general's mobile phone.

Fil-Am spy...

From page A1

US District Judge William G. Wells denied a request so he Aquino go free on bail until his trial, which is still months away.

"While you have a considerable value would be considered part of the opposition to the government, that it's a long stretch between expressing political views and knowingly passing classified information, which is what Mr. Aquino is charged with," Brennan said, adding:

"Aquino is a Filipino patriot who is opposed to the current administration. In America, it's not a crime to be in the opposition."

Aquino, 38, filed to the United States after being implicated in the murder of publicist Salvador "Bubby" Dacer and his driver, Manuel Corbito, in 2000.

He was arrested in September along with Leandro Aragoncillo, a Philippine-born intelligence analyst of the Federal Bureau of Investigation who used to work in the White House.

'Conspiratory'

The US Attorney's Office in Newark contends that Aquino and Aragoncillo conspired to overthrow the Arroyo administration.

"The evidence will show that Aragoncillo, Aquino ... and others possessed a passionate motive to enter and participate in the criminal conspiracy: subversion in the indictment, the destabilization and removal of the current government of the Republic of the Philippines," Assistant US Attorney Paul Fishman told the Honorable Dickinson Debevoise in his opening statement Tuesday.

Both men are charged with conspiracy and acting as unregistered foreign agents.

Aragoncillo, 47, is also accused of releasing an FBI computer file that Aquino requesting a photo finish recording of secret documents.

Prosecutors say Aragoncillo stole sensitive classified documents and gave them to Aquino, who then passed them along to current or former Philippine officials.

Quoted President Joseph Estrada, former Minority Leader Aquilino Pimentel Jr. and Lacson have acknowledged receiving e-mail from Aragoncillo or Aquino.

'Flight risk'

Judge Wells ruled that Aquino was a serious flight risk, noting that he faced deportation for overstaying a tourist visa and prosecutors in the Philippines for the Dacer-Corbito murders.

Prosecutors had claimed that Aquino "actively investigated the activities of [Mr. Arroyo] and other public officials in the Philippines," and either obtained or tried to obtain sensitive personal and financial information about them.

For example, prosecutors said, Aquino obtained still records for a Philippine judge in the President's office in Malacañang.

Brennan has acknowledged that Aquino received documents from Aragoncillo, but said none were marked confidential.

Aquino has no extensive intelligence and security background, according to court documents. In the Philippines, he served as chief of operations for the Presidential Anti-Organized Crime Task Force from July 1998 to January 2001, and rose took a course on crisis management at FBI headquarters in Quantico, Virginia, in August 2000.

'Persecution'

Brennan said Aquino left his homeland in June 2001 because he was a target in the power struggle of the Philippines, and he was being persecuted."

Asked after the hearing to elaborate, Brennan said Aquino had feared for his safety.

"The rough and tumble of Philippine politics is a lot rougher than what we experience here in the US," Brennan said. "He definitely felt at risk remaining in the Philippines."

Because of that, Brennan said, Aquino came to the United States in search of a haven school and sent a new life in New York City's Queens borough.

"What type of spy comes to the US and goes to nursing school?" Brennan said.

Aquino will be held out until the US and goes to nursing school.

'Not in bad faith'

In Manila, friends yesterday downplayed the value of the classified information that he and other opposition leaders had received.

Estrada, who acknowledged receiving information from Aragoncillo, said most of the material amounted to little more than news commentaries and assessments of politicians.

"I don't believe the spy sent documents in bad faith," Estrada told The Associated Press by phone. "What's spying there when there was nothing new in the downloaded materials? Everybody knew the contents. ... I read them in newspapers."

Estrada said he did not think that Aragoncillo passed on classified information for money, but because he was "overly concerned about his relatives and fellow Filipinos."

"Even if he was already at the FBI and is naturalized American, he still has a Filipino heart," Estrada said. AP

NATIONAL BIBLE WEEK

2 top bishops ask Filipinos not to despair

By Christian V. Esguerra

LAGDAMEO

ROSALES

TWO LEADING LIGHTS OF THE Roman Catholic Church in the Philippines appealed to Filipinos yesterday to keep faith in their country despite the seemingly endless economic and political crises that have overtaken it.

"There is no reason to despair for our country," Archbishop Angel Lagdameo, president of the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines (CBCP), said in a message marking the observance of National Bible Week to find "Hope for Our Country."

Lagdameo's optimism was based on his observation that good people continued to outnumber the bad ones. The prelate, who also heads the Archdiocese of Jaro, identified these good people as those who "follow the Word of God, made flesh in Jesus Christ who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life."

For an optimistic was Manila Archbishop Gaudencio Rosales, who believes the country could overcome the challenges it faces given the proper attitude toward the scriptures.

"May His Word be the lamp to our feet and a light to our path as we journey toward national healing and renewal," he said in a separate message.

National transformation, starting from individual conversion, is the direction being taken by Lagdameo, more than a month after he assumed leadership of the country's bishops, now numbering 110.

The prelate underscored this priority in last month's National Prayer Breakfast when he urged leaders to heed the government and private entities to be accountable for their actions.

In a strongly worded speech delivered in the presence of President Macapagal-Arroyo, he said an accountable leader is one who "does not sweep the trash under the carpet."

In a separate National Bible Week message, Iloilo Archbishop Arturo Bastes said "Filipinos have become outraged by of our dignity as Christians because of our many failures as a nation."

"Indeed, we are a nation that urgently needs healing, renewal and transformation," said Bastes, who heads the CBCP's Episcopal Commission on the Biblical Apostolate.

In a press conference launching the National Bible Week, Fr. Gerardo Tejuelos, the commission's director for Metro Manila, stressed in on the importance of going to the scriptures to answer today's travails.

Describing the Bible as the only source of truth, he warned Filipinos against being led false information or outright lies. "Sin will be exalted," he said in power.

Critics have also accused the Catholic hierarchy be allegedly not doing enough to enlighten its flock amid the lies and cover-ups postpartedly being peddled by some people in government.

The CBCP is scheduled to hold its first plenary assembly for the year and the first under Lagdameo on Jan. 23 to 26.

Cebu Archbishop Ricardo Vidal, head of the CBCP's Episcopal Commission on Public Affairs, said earlier that the discussions would touch on the national situation, including the unresolved questions over the legitimacy of the Arroyo presidency.

Erap group hails Magdalo 4

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

DESCRIBING THE ESCAPE OF the four Oakwood mutineers as "energy-injecting," members of the United Opposition (UNO) finally broke months of silence yesterday and vowed to renewing serious efforts to force President Macapagal-Arroyo out of Malacañang.

"This is the first cry of the United Opposition [this year]. To start off a renewed, reenergized, reinvigorated UNO [top Down Commander] Erap [Joseph Estrada] to former Sen. Francisco Tatad.

Tatad said last night was the first big gathering of the political opposition this year, but fewer members showed up compared to previous meetings.

Speaking through his lawyer, Magdalo leader Navy Lt. Antonio Trillanes IV also said yesterday: "The escape of the four had the full blessings of our group. This is just part of things to come."

Lawyer Rigor Guevara was interviewed yesterday after he visited Trillanes and other leaders of the Magdalo group who are being held at the Intelligence Service of the Armed Forces of the Philippines detention center.

On July 27, 2003, more than 300 junior officers and soldiers seized the posh Oakwood Premiere apartment-hotel in Makati City to denounce corruption in the military and the government. The mutiny was peacefully put down less than 24 hours later.

Well-planned

Trillanes' statements indicated that the escape of Rabonza, San Juan, Sarmiento and Bumidang had been planned well in advance.

"He assured the four on our end there is keen anyone. In general reports them to do the right things at the right time. I reiterate my call to the people to decide which side to take. [Mrs. (Mr. Arroyo) or change," Trillanes said.

Rabonza, San Juan, Sarmiento and Bumidang holed out first-time a few hours after Trillanes called on Filipinos to back either the President or change in a surprise media interview outside the Makati Regional Trial Court.

"They're following a script, and it's part of a grand design to unseat Mr. Arroyo," said a top police official, who is closely monitoring the anti-Arroyo movement.

The police official agreed to speak on the condition of anonymity.

He said the Magdalo group promised to overwhelm other officers and enlisted men to join a move to overthrow the Arroyo administration.

"Captain Antonio escaped in December. He posted his photos on Monday. Trillanes spoke on Tuesday, then the four soldiers escaped. This is scripted. This is part of a grand scenario, and the plan is to overthrow GMA. The destabilization moves have started," he said.

National Security Adviser Norberto Gonzales said he was investigating a new plot that included an alleged plan to assassinate the President and some members of his Cabinet.

Raw intelligence

Gonzales admitted that the intelligence report was still "raw" but it prompted the "very real possibility" after the escape of the four Oakwood mutineers.

Asked whether the plot involved a coup, Gonzales said the "organizers fully realized that they couldn't launch a coup because they don't have the sufficient coup [of the Armed Forces of the Philippines] was for keeping the AFP out of partisan politics."

Crisis conference

In the House of Representatives, an ally of Mr. Arroyo raised the alarm over an impending coup.

"[The military should] not discount the possibility that the Magdalo soldiers' escape could be part of a plan to once again involve members of AFP establishment in political adventurism," said Minority Leader Prospero Nograles.

"The news fact that five of the Magdalo leaders and members have already escaped from the facility means there's a big problem from within," he said.

The military top brass held an emergency crisis conference at Camp Aguinaldo yesterday morning to discuss the escape and the "morale" of the men. The military and police were on full alert in the capital, with checkpoints set up around military camps.

Oakwood II

The four fugitives issued a statement through GMA 7 news anchor Arnold Clavio, vowing to resume their failed attempt to oust Mr. Arroyo.

"We have looked from the cramped cells of a bogus regime ... Our oath is clear: Our place is with our people; the people's will is sovereign," they said.

They denounced "corruption, illegitimacy and neglect" and said they sought "change [in] a system that installs the people's enemies to power and perpetuates the exclusion of the majority."

They said the number of active troops in the military was growing.

Contact with lawyers

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"He said 'brother officers,' that's the term he used, excused them because they learned there was an evil intention against them ... I don't know if that means a threat against their lives or anything," Pelaez said.

Pelaez said they were able to talk to Bumidang over the phone at 5 a.m. yesterday, but late Thursday night, he had already received a text message from Bumidang.

He noted that Bumidang sounded relaxed and even cracked a joke.

Lawyer Theodore Te, who represents San Juan and Sarmiento, also received a text message from San Juan over 5 a.m. yesterday.

Doing fine

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Public and the defense pose Bumidang on custody time he and the other escapees.

Reprieve, who said he was "embarrassed" by the escape, initially dismissed the officers' claims that they had received inside help.

But he did not discount the possibility.

"We don't desire our troops. They are doing a good job. But if that comes out in the investigation, as he it," Esperon said.

Esperon declined to know about the planned escape, and yet non-confirm to prevent it.

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None of the detainees' guards have been relieved. Instead, Brig. Gen. Ruben Rafael was relieved as Fort Bonifacio camp commander.

Armed Forces Chief of Staff Gen. Generoso Senga called an emergency meeting of the top officials of the three major services—Army, Navy and Air Force. Philippine National Police Director Gen. Arturo Lomibao was also at the meeting.

Senga stressed "the desire of the President to securely the mutineers" for the escaped mutineers, according to Esperon.

Before the latest escape, the military and police had already identified it a priority to recapture Rabonza on orders of the President.

Still, Sudden was able to launch a civil disobedience campaign and reportedly more two military camps and the police national headquarters without getting caught.

About 320 of the Oakwood mutineers, deemed to have been misled by their officers, were released from detention in late 2003. Some 300 others remained in custody until late May after a military court ruled they had served their sentences as lesser charges while confined to barracks. With reports from Christine O. Avendaño and Norman Bordadora

A puzzle: Intel head . . .

From page A1

and their security escorts were boarding their vehicles.

Quezada, who was in a hurry Tagalog, an aloof retired away the reporters who sought to interview him.

Sources said Trillanes could see how given the media interviews on his Quezada, the comrades of Trillanes and three other alleged mutiny ers leaders, had let him.

Trillanes got his half hour talk with the media over if fellow Oakwood mutiny leader Marine Capt. Nicanor Faeldon was able to escape from leafy custody by giving his escorts the slip on Dec. 31 outside the Makati RTC building.

Trillanes, who is the spokesperson for the 300 junior officers and men who staged a mutiny at the Ayala Oakwood Premiere on July 27, 2003, was given time to talk to the media by his lady-consultant.

Pre-arranged interview

Accounts kept search around the media-scribed Trillanes, the Magdalo leader commented a few more questions before proceeding to the ground floor, where a news conference set up for a pre-arranged interview with ABS-CBN's Cris Delkus.

Trillanes gladly answered Delkus's questions for 15 to 20 minutes, as other members of the media listened. A military guard, who was in plainclothes, maintained large pressing to his watch to remind Delkus about the time.

Trillanes used the opportunity to the left to respond on his politi-

cal views and to call on the nation to take a hard look at the Arroyo administration.

"It's time to all of us to decide which side we will take, whether we are for GMA, Mr. Arroyo] or for change ... If you choose change, it means you want and you are hoping that your quality of life and that of your fellow Filipinos will be better," Trillanes said as mutineers and their security escorts listened.

"If you choose GMA, that means you are content with your situation now . . . until 2010," he said.

Back bottom

When the interview wrapped up at around 12:20 p.m., Trillanes, surrounded by his security escorts, walked to the waiting vehicles.

Before he boarded the vehicle though, he stopped for a few seconds to answer a TV reporter's query on whether the options he had laid down would uplift or further degrade the nation's lot. "How can it go up or down? We're already at rock bottom."

With Trillanes and his guards aboard, the convoy then sped off, followed by two AUVs filled with armed guards.

Quezada could not be reached for comment yesterday.

The AFP leadership has declared it would remain "neutral" amid the political crisis hounding the Commander in Chief since the "Hello Garci" tape, which allegedly indicated that Mr. Arroyo had rigged the 2004 presidential elections, emerged last June.

Escape part of bigger plot

From page A1

obviously is pseudonyms. It did not provide details.

"We broke up the Sea AFS and we join our fellow Filipinos who now refuse to be cowed. We are a force that grows stronger by the day," the four Oakwood mutineers said in a statement they issued later through GMA 7 network.

The escape, the second after fellow mutineer Marine Capt. Nicanor Faeldon gave his guards the slip last month, has triggered fresh speculations of a plot to destabilize the Arroyo administration after the President's political foes failed to unseat her with an impeachment complaint in September and after several months of street protests.

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Never again, says girl . . .

From page A1

Florencio "Sonik" Abad and Antonio Trillanes IV, Florencio Abad, said playwall never held up the Bible again for Mr. Arroyo.

"With all the controversies surrounding her, I think we deserve someone better," Abad said of Mrs. Arroyo, a true daughter of her father.

The older Abad was among the 10 ranking officials of the Arroyo administration who resigned on July 4, 2005, and asked Mr. Arroyo to do the same and to answer accusations she rigged in the May 2004 elections.

Collectively called the "Ryan 10," the group has condemned by call for Mr. Arroyo to resign through the Black and White Movement, of which the older Abad is an active member.

P200-bill

A snapshot of the historic event will be immortalized on the P200 bill, as declared by the senior nicknamed Sherry, now a churching the 30-year-old senior high school student at Holy Spirit College.

"I'm part of history. It's a very nice blessing," she said, sheepishly. "My friends, they tease me. They call me 'multibing pera' because my face is on the P200 bill."

Abad said the family was at Edsa when her father delivered a speech denouncing Estrada, who was impeached for plunder. It was her second day at Edsa where her dad and siblings Anna Sandra, Ibn Emmanuel and Luis Andrew decided to join the march to Malacañang.

"They said it might not be safe, so I was left behind at Edsa with Mom," Abad said.

She recalled helping her mother and the nuns fix up things at the shrine.

Ironically, the Abad family now find itself in the same side of the political spectrum as the man they had helped oust from power.

Waste of time

The camp of former President Estrada called Edsa II a power grab pushed by pro-Arroyo forces. Estrada spokesperson Atty. Delia Rose Dillangalen said he is convinced that it's time commemorating Edsa II as it was not a "popular uprising. It's equivalent to celebrating the death of democracy."

FIVE YEARS AGO TODAY, Fifth Abad, then 11, was handed to the unusually large Bible the Chief Justice Davide administered the oath of office to Ms Arroyo. INQUIRER

The camera has not known a moment's peace since President Arroyo stepped over the reins of power," said Dillangalen.

Easy remembered someone looking for "a young person wearing white," and of being told that she was going to hold the Bible. Mother's reaction said it was actually Ms. Rose Beatrice, then seven years old, and now the Lind Transportation Office chief, who was scouting for a young person to circular job.

"I thought I was going to of the Bible during the Estrada time. I didn't realize it was the oath taking," the recalled.

Things happened fast

Somebody also suggested that Abad wear her T-shirt inside out, so hide the (unintelligible) on the shirt. But nobody cared that she was only wearing khaki pants and rubber shoes.

Things happened fast, looking back, Abad remembered being overwhelmed by the crowd and the photographers who were pushing coverage.

"I didn't know what to look. I was also scared. I fell off the stage because I was being pushed toward the edge," she said during an interview at the Abad residence in Quezon City.

Global

Images of the event were around the globe as news spread about the downfall of Estrada, and Abad's relatives abroad, including her aunt, the late celebrated actor Pancho Abad, noted that the girl holding up the Bible looked familiar.

The most surprised was her dad, who could not contain himself as the night of his youngest daughter playing a part in history. The elder Abad has also claimed his bragging rights.

Bragging rights

"He is always telling people I was that girl," Abad giggled.

At the Abad family reunion in Batangas in December, Abad said her dad raffled off P200 bills with her signature. "It's a collector's item, preaching thereby as a thing," she said.

Abad actually has a sheet of uncut P200 bills given to her as a souvenir by the Bangko Sentral. She noted that in the picture, Ms Arroyo was taller than her.

She said pretty Abad said she has grown three or four inches since then. "I'm taller now," she said, stretching to show full five-foot, one-height.

New power 'superbody' a new layer of bureaucracy, IPPs say

CREATING A COMPETITIVE ENVIRONMENT through proper implementation of the Electric Power Industry Reform Act (Epira), not the creation of a new layer of bureaucracy, will solve the problems besetting the power industry.

This was the position of the Philippine Independent Power Producers Association (Pippa) as Executive Order No. 474 creating a power industry "superbody" that will forge private sector partnerships for energy projects.

President Macapagal-Arroyo issued EO 474 last November creating the Philippine Strategic Oil, Gas, Energy Investment and Power Infrastructure Office (PHILSOPHIL, ostensibly to "avert the dire approaching energy crisis."

The agency is tasked, among other things, to identify and certify "national priority projects" and enter into agreements with private entities to undertake and realize those priority projects.

But Pippa said recent developments in the energy industry have caused much controversy and concern for the industry players and prospective investors. It said the creation of an energy "superbody" through EO No. 474 is perceived as a major setback to the government's drive to privatize and sell the National Power Corp.'s (NPC) assets.

"The EO is symptomatic of a government wanting to go back to central planning, a policy that has only given the country disastrous results," it said. "It is also a complete reversal of Epira's vision of creating competitive arbiters will eventually benefit the consumers, and government finally getting rid of the burden of heavily subsidizing the NPC."

Mr Arroyo has postponed the implementation of EO 474 pending a review and further "fine-tuning." But the Pippa said it was still concerned about the damage the EO can inflict on the power industry should government decide to push through with it.

The proposed agency, Pippa said, is yet another means by which government can re-regulate and control the industry, it said. "It is a 'superbody'—a government instrumentality that can decide which power projects will be developed, who will develop them, how they will be financed. Its powers are limited in at limitless in its imagination. By definition, it can effectively rescind even the ERC [Energy Regulatory Commission] and render it powerless."

Thus, it said, the Pippa strongly condemns any and all efforts to undermine the goals and gains of Epira's privatization and deregulation policies.

In 2001, Congress passed Republic Act No. 9136, otherwise known as the Epira, which, the Pippa said, promised a deregulated and privatized environment in which market forces and competition would dictate the prices and quality of power supply and service. The Epira also created the ERC, a regulatory body.

"With all these in place, we ask the government to simply remain true to its word and allow the country to realize the benefits of true privatization and deregulation as promised by the Epira," Pippa said.

Ely Lopez, Journal managing ed; 55

THE NATIONAL PRESS CLUB (NPC) has expressed sadness and shock over the death of People's Journal managing editor Eleanor "Ely" S. Lopez.

Ely died of cardio-pulmonary arrest yesterday. He was dead on arrival at the Ospital ng Maynila. He was 55.

The body lies at the Mt. Carmel Chapel in New Manila, Quezon City.

A lifetime member of the NPC, Ely is survived by his wife Concepcion and children Eric, Erwin and Eleanor Jr.

NPC President Tony Antonio paid tribute to Ely, saying he was a tireless entrepreneur and hard-hitting journalist in both print and radio.

Former NPC president Louie Logan is said Ely was one of the pillars of Journals Group, noting that he had been with Journal since its inception.

SBMA may soon issue ECCs

By Blanche S. Rivera

THE SUBIC BAY METROPOLITAN AUTHORITY is preparing an environmental impact assessment study of the entire Freeport zone to secure authority from the national government to approve projects in the environment, sully-related area.

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources will give the SBMA a programmatic environmental compliance certificate or an ECC covering a special zone, if the SBMA meets all the requirements set by the DENR.

The SBMA and DENR signed last week a memorandum of agreement that would authorize the SBMA to issue ECCs and violators of regulations, and impose and collect fines from erring firms, when it acquires the programmatic ECC.

"Once the monitoring and permitting requirements would be handled by the SBMA, less than it currently prejudice to the DENR as it will issue ECCs for environmentally critical projects," Environmental Management Bureau executive director Lolibeth Medrano said yesterday.

Environmentally critical projects include the construction of major dams, and other activities related to the mining and petrochemical industries, and those that pose direct damage to the environment.

The DENR and SBMA have been in a legal tussle over the jurisdiction in granting projects within the Freeport zone. The SBMA insists it has authority over the special zone, but the Court of Appeals has ruled that this did not cover the DENR's authority to issue ECCs.

Following a series of meetings last year, the DENR in SBMA finally inked an agreement last week to allow the SBMA to process and issue the ECCs once it has secured a programmatic ECC from the DENR.

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TRUST OFFICERS ASSOCIATION OF THE PHILIPPINES • MANILA • TOAP

Congress oversight body calls for end to VFA in 6 months

Front page A1

On the motion of Sen. Juan Ponce Enrile, the Lords also sensitive include in the resolution a paragraph that would "terminate all funding from the Philippine government for the Balikatan exercises," effectively stopping RP-US military exercises until after the end of this year.

"This is our initial response to the United States' [refusal to un-tender] custody of the accused to the Philippine government," said Cayetano, who chairs the Senate foreign affairs committee.

He added, "I hope our executive department will feel the pulse and the sense of the House and the Senate in this matter. It's an open sign."

GMA 'ethically bound'

"We should also intensify our diplomatic efforts along with the desire of ours to terminate and reorganize the treaty," Cayetano said.

The resolution—which originated from the US Embassy's refusal on Monday to surrender the Americans charged with rape—will be submitted next week to the two chambers of Congress for approval before it is sent to President Macapagal-Arroyo.

"The resolution will be sent to the President, who will, in effect, be officially bound to transmit it to the US Embassy through the DFA [Department of Foreign Affairs]," Santiago said.

"Since Congress sets foreign policy by the Senate powers to concur in treaties, it is Congress therefore that will set the policy on whether custody shall be transferred or renegotiated," she said.

After the President formally notifies the US government of the Philippines' intention to terminate the treaty, there will still be a period of six months before the treaty is "unconditionally terminated."

"We are hoping that we can negotiate with the US a treaty provision that makes custody by the Philippines compulsory so automatically cases a culprit complaint is filed in court by the same prosecutors," Santiago said.

This provision is found in the Status of Forces Agreements forged by the United States with South Korea, Germany.

"My hope is that during the next six months ...if the US is serious about a VFA, it will on its own initiative request a renegotiation. It can at least give us the courtesy of asking. Why do you wish to terminate it?" Santiago said.

Cayetano said the President has to discuss the VFA first under "the prospect of the US agreeing to our request for custody of the four Marines through diplomatic channels is to be very dim."

"Despite the dims," he told the hearing, adding that she had] our note to Ms. de. royel's court.

Unchanged views

Reached by the Inquirer for comment, the US Embassy maintained its stance.

"Our views have not changed that the VFA is a mutually beneficial and useful framework that describes the legal status of visiting US military personnel and includes both the US and the Philippines to self-assist from additional security interests," press attaché Matthew Lusenkop said.

He said the US government considered the case against a sailor to be "resolved" in connection with the rape case that, he noted, was now "proceeding to trial" under the terms of the VFA.

He also said the embassy would "continue to cooperate" with Philippine authorities.

Lusenkop declined to comment on the controversial resolution itself or on the lawmakers' deliberations, but said there is a standard procedure, the embassy was keeping Washington updated on developments.

Philippine prison

Fresh from the failed diplomatic effort to gain custody of the accused, Foreign Secretary Alberto Romulo assured lawmakers that the agreement would do time in a Philippine prison if convicted.

Romulo, who is in Washington, made the assurance in a statement read in his behalf by Undersecretary Rafael Seguis of the Lords's deliberations on the case several months.

"The accused will be tried in accordance with Philippine laws. If found guilty, this penitentiary jurisdiction confesses, and incarceration in the Philippines, to serve their sentence," Romulo said.

"Personal, to the VFA, the US has assured us of Philippine custody after trial, if the accused are found guilty," he said.

Romulo described a "problem" with the VFA provision on custody, suggesting that this document the legal focus of the Philippine request for custody.

"As pointed out by several Philippine experts in international law, the problem lies in the absence of a common definition of the expression on 'custody during the case ...'" he said.

In a separate statement, the DFA indicated that it had not given up on its custody talks with the American diplomats.

It said a second note verbale was sent to the US embassy on Jan. 13, "reiterating" the Philippine position and asking that "discussions" continue.

Romulo also said the DFA would continue to negotiate for custody even during the trial of the accused.

But Enrile said the second note verbale would "drop the dime of the deal."

"My honest, candid, realistic and pragmatic position is that we can never get custody of these people. That's a fact of life. If you don't have the guts, the clout, the political will to demand custody, then you have to accept the consequences of your inaction," Enrile said.

"Because if you don't have the guts to say that we demand custody, they will not give you custody. That's a fact of life. It's as simple as that," he said.

Enrile said the Philippines could not expect the US to surrender the Americans charged with rape "because we are a small country and they are a big country."

"They will not surrender because they are a big country. They will not surrender because we are a small country. That's a fact of life. It's as simple as that," he said.

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Romulo has been in Washington since last week for engagements that, according to the department's media affairs, have nothing to do with the rape case.

But Seguis told the Lords that Romulo had raised the issue of Philippine custody over the Marines with a deputy of US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice.

"Your honor, I understand that Secretary Albert Romulo had met with the deputy assistant secretary of state," Seguis told Santiago.

He said the US official, whose he did not name, visited Romulo's hotel but that the DFA chief got the same response "as what I described to [senators] just so."

That led Santiago to erupt and say that herself did not meet with Romulo.

Only a deputy

"Exactly so, continue yo?" Santiago said, adding:

"Apparently all of these indicate that the US does not feel highly on the Philippines if, in fact, it looks to submit, or the Philippines that it has not bothered to appoint a regular ambassador [to Manila]. With a report from Abdon Cruz Dino

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US Embassy asked: Who's in charge?

By Tonette Orejas
PDI Central Luzon Desk

THE PROSECUTION IN THE RAPE case against four US Marines appears to be in limbo: Who is the American official currently accountable for their custody?

Olongapo City Prosecutor Fiscalino Ledesma yesterday observed that the Embassy officials had been providing "a general answer" to the question of custody, and had not gone beyond invoking provisions in the RP-US Visiting Forces Agreement.

"They keep on saying they are entitling custody of these servicemen, but they haven't told us yet the name of the official responsible for [the four]," he told the Inquirer.

According to Ledesma, the embassy should name the actual custodian of the servicemen charged with raping a Filipina woman because it is this person who will receive and implement judicial orders and assume liability if any of the boys flees.

He said the issue of custody was "clearer" during the time the US government maintained military bases in Luzon.

Back then, state prosecutors issued a "legal hold" document against erring US servicemen, he said.

The hold order document served as a hold depositor order, meaning the offenders were not allowed to leave the country until the case was finished. State commanders issued custody receipts that named the officials responsible for the offenders.

The hold order was in effect while offenders were tried in military courts. Filipino judges and prosecutors were informed who the custodians were.

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Morales says he's too good for Pacquiao

Front page A1

ready to promptly hang it up says Pacquiao, whom he beat in their first encounter.

Morales earlier, Pacquiao spoke in English to avoid further down while thanking the promoters, host Inova Wynn, his countrymen, his friend President Macapagal-Arroyo and other Filipino politicians coming to back him in his quest for immortality against Morales.

Built in superiority

Morales, in quietly explaining his built in superiority, repeated what his manager Fernando Montiel had told the Inquirer upon their arrival here—that the result of the 12-round rematch on Saturday would not be too different from last year's—that Morales would emerge the winner.

The prevailing confidence in the Mexican camp was fueled by its claim that, while Team Pacquiao could if had learned from its mistakes, Morales would be improving on his tested victory. Translation: He would be more ahead after improving on his winning ways.

"I have similar values I came to in inside the ring, I can do whatever I want to do inside there," said Morales to stress his multi-dimensional advantages over Pacquiao, who is generally perceived to be a one-trick pitcher.

"I'm in great shape, mentally and physically," Morales added. "I fight a different style, I fight better."

Of course, it's no secret that the Mexican has been working on his stamina, trial hard, to make adjustments and boost his skills that could score in clubs a counterattack right out of a reverse in a duck, unlike last time when he was often caught cowering frantically.

All that, remedial Morales, was to be expected from victory.

Makings of a classic

"But they would be making a mistake if they based their hopes and plans on what happened last time when I took against Eddie Barbosa," Morales explained.

For his part, Top Rank top boss Bob Arum said the battle had the makings of a classic.

"We have power, Morales and Pacquiao will bring in their A-game, so-something," the famed promoter reasoned quipped.

Pacquiao was described by promoter Gary Shaw as the only Filipino fighter who can speak straight English.

Pacquiao general Moreno Jose in Spanish—realistic glacier and signed a great pulse...to the delight of a television crew from Tijuana, Mexico! [illegible]

'Brokeback' breaks . . .

From page A1

and lobster straight; took part in a gay rodeo in Chandler in the Arizona desert at the weekend.

For years such taboos were shunned and even was out of some towns. Now the apolitical movement is a booming part of the cowboy class, though many participants have lived their own roles like "Brokeback Mountain," which won three Golden Globes on Monday and is now in the front line for the Oscars.

Lori McGregor is spokesperson for the Rural Rumor gay rodeo and there were firefighters, doctors, construction workers and other professionals among the members.

"So is Brokeback Mountain," she said. "We are actually massive. Some even have real children, before they understood they couldn't change," he said.

Dressed to drag

Like other cowboys, the members of Chandler gay rodeo like to ride horses, catch a calf with their bare hands or rope a bull.

But the Rural Runner Rodeo has its own special characteristics.

Competitors also have to put underwear on the back legs of a sheep or tie a ribbon on the bull's tail. They have just hosted one.

But the biggest test is where a cowboy dressed in drag has to ride an angry bull without falling.

Protective headwear is compulsory but one competitor joked: "Should we wear the helmet on the top or the wig on the helmet?"

Chandler is part of the International Gay Rodeo Association which has existed by about two decades and now organizes 20 events a year in the United States and Canada.

It has about 1,000 members across North America.

Homophobia

"We just people who like the laboratory style of life, but we don't want to suffer homophobia because of our journey," said Alan Bond, 45, who works by a call room company in Fort Lauderdale, Florida.

"Brokeback Mountain," the story of a secret love between two cowboys in the 1960s and "Up, last had a strong impact on real gay cowboys, who work in offices who have acclaimed the film and its bittersweet director Ang Lee.

"I grew up in Oklahoma, a redneck state. When I realized I was gay, I really had to hide and be very careful," added Bond.

Jones, who sent in the rodeo classes to entertain the Chandler crowds between the events, said: "I hope I can show this film to my parents. It's full of memories." AFP

Japanese fugitive arrested at Naia

JAPANESE FUGITIVE Yukio Onoda was arrested by immigration agents Tuesday night at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport after he arrived on a Thai Airways flight from Bangkok.

The 37-year-old Onoda is wanted in Japan for allegedly bringing Thai women into the country to work as prostitutes.

A Japanese court had issued a warrant for Onoda's arrest on Aug. 26, 2005, for violation of Japan's entertainment-security law, the equivalent of the Philippines' anti-human trafficking law.

The charge was based on one incident of alleged recruitment by the suspect of a Thai woman who was forced into prostitution after Onoda allegedly handed her over to an accomplice. The woman was reportedly delivered in a prostitution den in Gotokubi in Nagasaki prefecture.

Last year, Onoda arrived in the Philippines on Oct. 26.

Interpol-Tokyo said Japan's national police agency informed the Bureau of Immigration about Onoda's fugitive status.

The Japanese authorities also told Fernandez that Onoda had visited Thailand 54 times since January 2003 and was always in the company of Thai women when he visited Japan.

On Oct. 18, 2005, Fernandez issued a mission order to arrest Onoda but the Japanese was able to elude BI agents and escape to Thailand on Nov. 8.

The BI placed him on its watch list on Nov. 17 and it was that information that popped up when he tried to reenter the country last Tuesday.

Fernandez said Onoda will be deported. He is being held at the BI detention center in Taguig City pending his return home the country's B. Inkoverviu

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The WORLD

Elbr Lorente B. Gueco

US, EU rebuff Iran call for nuke talks

WASHINGTON—THE UNITED STATES AND THE European Union on Wednesday rebuffed an Iranian call for new talks on their nuclear dispute and pressed their drive to refer Tehran to the UN Security Council.

"I think we've long passed the point of talk. We expect action from the regime in Iran," White House spokesperson Scott McClellan told reporters.

EU Secretary of State Javier Solana delivered his cool EU foreign policy chief Javier Solana signed the Iranians had yet to show they were ready to deal with Western fears they were seeking to develop nuclear weapons.

Iran said the message from Washington's European allies, which had been negotiating with Tehran, was "there is not much to talk about" after Iran moved to resume uranium nuclear research last week.

"I think it's up to the Iranians to demonstrate that they are not just talking but they are serious," Rice told reporters before meeting with Solana at the state department.

"It was the Iranians who walked away from the negotiations, who broke the moratorium (on nuclear activities)," Rice said of the effort led by Britain, France and Germany to resolve the crisis.

The so-called EU-3 has joined with the United States in seeking an emergency meeting of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in Vienna, with the aim of heading Iran before the UN Security Council.

Solana said the EU had received a letter from Iran's nuclear and security adviser requesting a resumption of the discussions on a package of economic and other incentives for Tehran that began three years ago.

"We replied that it doesn't make much sense to have another meeting if there is nothing new to what they are going to put on the table," Solana said. France and Britain have already rejected the Iranian offer.

"I think the position, now is what we have said ... which is to have a decision to call for an extraordinary meeting in Vienna of the (IAEA) agency and then to refer the dossier to the Security Council," Solana said.

The initiative was clouded by the reluctance of countries such as Russia and China, two of the council's five veto-wielding permanent members, to back sweeping UN sanctions against Iran.

Solana told reporters that Russia, which has offered to handle Iran's uranium-enrichment work on its soil as a neutral measure, was trying to buy some more time for it to negotiate with Tehran.

He said Moscow wanted the UN Security Council to informally discuss the case before an official decision on a UN referral. The Russians also are too tied to the IAEA to move before its regularly scheduled session on March 6. AFP

Top bombmaker killed in Pakistan airstrike, says US

ISLAMABAD—AN AL-QAEDA BOMB EXPERT with a $5-million bounty on his head and a ties to two of the group's No. 2 men among four militants believed killed by a US airstrike last week, Pakistani intelligence sources said on Thursday.

Pakistani Information Minister Sheikh Rashid Ahmed acknowledged that "a few militants" had been killed in Friday's attack, which also killed 16 civilians, but said their bodies had not been recovered and their identity was under investigation.

However, intelligence sources said they believed they know the names of three men killed in the attack, which US officials say was aimed at al-Qaeda second-in-command Ayman al-Zawahiri's.

Pakistani intelligence sources said al-Zawahiri was not at the scene of the attack, but one of the dead was thought to be one of his men—a Iraq, Abdul Rehman Al-Masri al-Baghdadi, who was responsible for al-Qaeda's media department.

Another was Midhat Mursi al-Sayid Umar, an expert in explosives and poisons who carried a $5 million on his head from the US Federal Bureau of Investigation.

Pakistani officials gave a slightly different spelling for the name, but the FBI says Umar ran a training camp at Derunta in Afghanistan and since 1999 had proliferated making manuals containing crude recipes for chemical and biological weapons.

ABC News and the New York Times, citing Pakistani officials, also reported that the 12-year-old Egyptian had been killed.

"If this person is gone, it is significant. His loss, and the loss of people like him, would certainly be a blow to al-Qaeda in the region," said a US counterterrorism official, who asked not to be identified.

The third man identified by Pakistani intelligence officers was Abu Obaidah al-Masri, al-Qaeda chief of operations in Afghanistan's eastern Kunar province, where US and Afghan forces regularly come under militant attack. Reuters

Planning urged vs flu as SARS chaos recalled

WASHINGTON—HOSPITALS MAY HAVE TO adopt military-style triage in case of a bird flu pandemic, and must get plans into place now for dealing with one, a Canadian expert said on Wednesday.

Toronto hospitals that had to deal with the 2003 SARS outbreak learned the hard way that it pays to have plans and procedures in place before an emergency happens, said Dr. Jayne Hawrelak, of the University of Toronto, and a member of the Critical Care Provincial Triage Provincial Committee.

Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome spread out of southern China in 2003 and eventually was spread to spots around the world by air travelers, killing about 800 people and infecting close to 8,000 before it was brought under control in July 2003.

It killed 44 people in Toronto and forced the quarantine of more than 30,000.

A pandemic of H5N1 avian influenza would be worse. The disease now mostly affects birds but it has occasionally jumped to people, killing just around 80 in six countries.

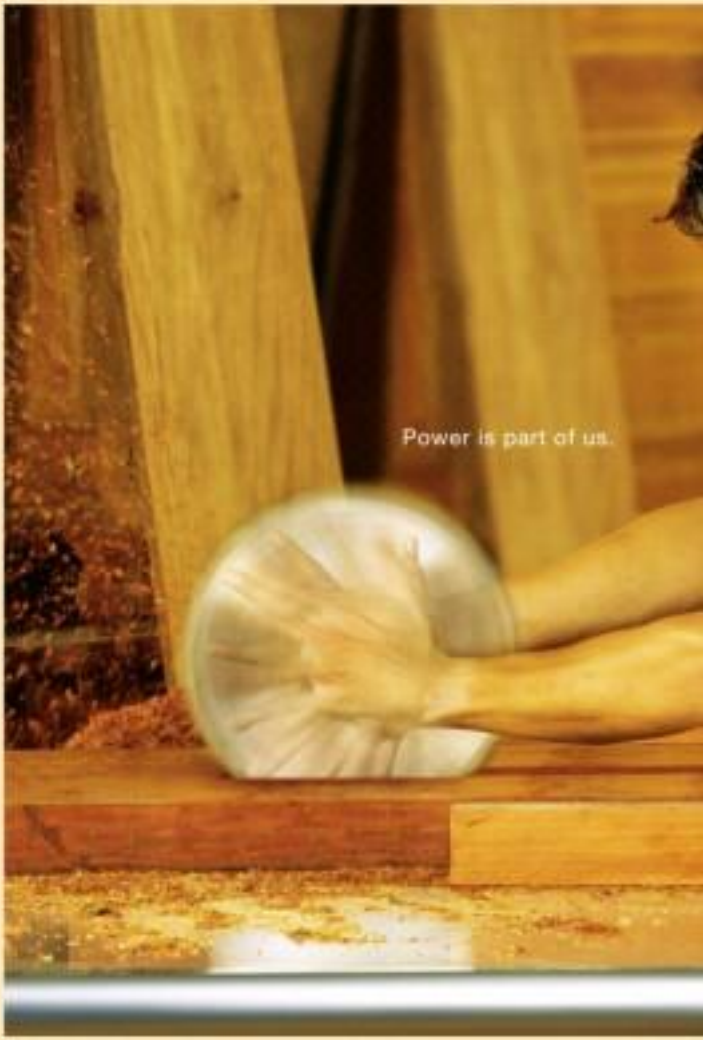
The fear is that the virus could mutate into a human influenza, spread quickly and kill millions globally.

World health leaders say no one is ready to deal with this.

Canada learned some lessons from SARS but will not have all the resources needed to cope, said Hawrelak.

"What we have been told is to expect about a 20 percent attack (infection) rate over a six-week period," Hawrelak told reporters based amount of medical professionals.

That would overload current capacity for intensive care units with influenza patients alone—not including all the other needs for an ICU, which are already almost full in capacity every day, she said. Reuters



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China struggles to curb growing social unrest

BEIJING—PUBLIC ORDER DISTURBances in China are on the rise, a police spokesperson said on Thursday, but the existence of growing instability that the ruling Communist Party is struggling to curb.

China has been grappling with an acknowledged increase in social unrest, sparked by public anger over issues ranging from land grabs without proper compensation and official corruption to a yawning wealth gap.

The Ministry of Public Security put the total number of "public order disturbances—demonstrations of unrest, gathering of mobs and strong up of township" at 87,000 last year, up 6.6 percent from 2004.

While the ministry did not say how many people had been arrested or charged, the figure reinforces a tally of "mass incidents"—communist jargon for mass protests—which showed a 28 percent rise from 2003 to 2004.

Hong Kong's Beijing-owned Ta Kung Pao newspaper has quoted Public Security Minister Zhou Yongkang as saying there were 74,000 "mass incidents" in 2004 compared with 58,000 in 2003.

Ministry spokesperson Wu Heping declined to give a figure for mass incidents last year.

"Demands by masses have emerged due to rapid economic and social development. Contradictions in communities and governments as all levels attach a high degree of importance to these problems," Wu told a news conference.

"We hope the masses can voice their appeals through lawful channels and consciously safeguard public order and respect laws ... We hope problems can be resolved harmoniously and in an orderly way."

To curb growing unrest, Luo top generals in the People's Armed Police pledged this month to boost the "combat effectiveness" of the constabulary in curbing paramilitary police.

New national emergency response measures require local officials to get news of unrest straight into the hands of central leaders. It is common for local authorities to cover up such incidents to avoid hurting their chances of promotion.

In December, paramilitary police opened fire on residents of Dongzhou village in the southern province of Guangdong protesting against a lack of compensation for land appropriated for a new power plant. The government says three villagers were killed.

This month, a Chinese court jailed four villagers for up to five years for staging an unauthorized protest that turned violent in Dongzhou in the eastern province of Zhejiang in April.

Ministry spokesperson Wu said the number of attacks with explosives nationwide had fallen by 13.7 percent in 2005 last year.

He gave no details. China has a track record of fudging statistics to cover up problems or to drive up perceptions of economic success.

The Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, a top government think-tank, revealed in a policy paper on social issues that 2,500 explosions had rocked China in the first nine months of 1999. It failed to say how many were deliberate.

The ministry spokesperson said the number of incidents nationwide had dropped by 15.8 percent last year, rapes by 6.6 percent and trafficking of women and children 13.7 percent.

Some 13.6 percent of people arrested by police were under 18.

Reuters

CHINESE models show off their painted bodies during a body-painting performance at a restaurant in Hunjiang Jan. 11. Municipal authorities have banned nude body shows in public places since May 2005. AP

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WORLDBRIEFS

Ambush, kidnaps in Iraq

BAGHDAD — Insurgents mounted a major ambush in Baghdad on Wednesday, killing eight Filipinos and kidnapping one and possibly two African engineers in a second coordinated attack in the capital in as many days. In the southern city of Basra, two employees of US security firm were killed and two wounded when their convoy was attacked by assailants the family of kidnapped American journalist appealed for her release as a group possibly linked to her abductors said it freed dozens of Iraqis holding relatives. Security forces say they are bracing for a possible spike in violence in the hours that follow national elections on Thursday, they will show moderate Sunni gains for the ruling Shiite-Kurdish bloc. Reuters

US rights abuse hit

NEW YORK—US counterterrorism policies, with their deliberate use of "torture and mistreatment," and the global defense of human rights on the back foot in 2006, Human Rights Watch said in its annual report Wednesday. The New York-based monitor said the US-waging two-fisted terrorist recruitment and threatened Washington's ability to pressure other countries into respecting international law. "Fighting terrorism is central to the human rights cause," said Kenneth Roth, executive director of Human Rights Watch. "But using illegal tactics against alleged terrorists is both wrong and counterproductive." The watchdog also criticized US allies in the war on terror for undermining Office of the International Criminal Court, calling Britain for seeking to secure assurances from Washington that its torture, and Canada for moves to dilute some body outlawing enforced disappearances. AFP

Norvasc patent upheld

NEW YORK — Pfizer Inc. said yesterday that a federal court in the Northern District of Illinois has upheld the company's US patent covering amlodipine besylate, the active ingredient in Norvasc, the world's most prescribed branded medicine for treating hypertension. The patent had been challenged by the generic manufacturer Apotex. Judge James B. Zagel in Chicago ruled that the patent (US Patent No. 4,879,303) covering amlodipine besylate is valid, enforceable and infringed by the generic manufacturer's product. The decision, which is subject to appeal, prohibits Apotex from launching a generic version of amlodipine until September 2007. "The court decision is another important victory for medical innovation, which will continue to help physicians in treating life-saving medicines, as well as for the patients who benefit from these medicines," said Jeffrey Kindler, vice chairman and general counsel of Pfizer.

Indonesia atrocities

JAKARTA — The Indonesia military must take action and accept criticism for excesses in control East Timor during a 24-year occupation of the province that caused the deaths of up to 180,000 civilians, according to a report cited Thursday by The Australian newspaper. The newspaper said it obtained a copy of the 1,600 page report by the East Timorese Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation, which is due to be handed to the United Nations by East Timor President Kaisina Guterres on Friday. The report details how Indonesian soldiers used napalm and chemical weapons to poison food and water supplies during their 1975 invasion of the territory, a former Portuguese colony with an overwhelmingly Roman Catholic population. AP

18 dead in Kenya battle

LOKWAR, Kenya—A battle in Kenya's borders between Ethiopian and Kenyan nomads has left 18 people dead in drought-stricken northern Kenya, officials and cattle herders said Thursday. Ethiopian warriors crossed into Kenya last Friday and attacked Turkana herdsmen in order to raise their animals, said Ngengo Mbiti, the district commissioner for Turkana. The fighting killed 29 of the raiders and eight Kenyans, all of them women and children. The violence took place in the remote village of Lokwar bordering, along the Kenya-Ethiopia border and 420 km north of Lodwar, area administrator Lucas Ariong said. Most of the battle was reached the regional capital Thursday morning. AP

Russia freeze kills 24

MOSCOW—Russia early Thursday was bracing itself for a second day of freezing cold, with authorities reconnecting Moscow businesses and employees back home from a spree during an unseasonable warm spell that broke records. On Christmas 2011 in the capital and even lower elsewhere. Twenty-four people have to death in western Russia Wednesday, and Moscow switched to a "strict" energy conservation regime in the northwest Russian region of Novgorod. 12 people, most of them homeless, died of hypothermia overnight, the Interfax news agency said. Separately, authorities collected the bodies of 10 people found on the streets of Volgograd. AP

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

OPINION

An inside job

AS MUCH AS IT MIGHT IRRITATE OTHERS, THE obligation of an attorney is to protect his client within the bounds of the law. Therefore, when lawyer Feisel Palido heard that four of the Oakwood mutineers were going to be moved from their detention cells in Fort Bonifacio to somewhere supposedly more secure, he rushed to attend to his clients.

EDITORIAL

Lt. Gen. Hermogenes Esperon Jr., chief of the Philippine Army, says that the military got wind of a possible escape attempt by the officers (Capt. Nathanael Rebenta and 1st Lieutenants Lawrence San Juan, Antonio Sarsonas Jr. and Patricio Buenafe Jr.). Because of the intelligence reports, the military decided to transfer the prisoners from the Custodial Management Unit (CMU) to a nearby building. Palido, on the other hand, says that the transfer was going to be carried out without so much as a by-your-leave from a judge or even a motion of the lawyers of the prisoners.

Things got confusing when Palido showed up at Fort Bonifacio. The military claims that Palido's appearance was a diversionary tactic, because the officers escaped while he was arguing with military officials. The prisoners washed some chairs, climbed out of a window, cut through barbed wire barriers, and escaped.

Certainly, military officials from Esperon on down have no reason to look kindly on Palido, who spent the hours wasted surely following the escape suggesting that there was the dire possibility of a release of the prisoners either being contemplated or being carried out. Palido subsequently admitted that Rustenberg had called him to say they had truly escaped, with the assistance of fellow soldiers in Fort Bonifacio.

So it was an inside job, which is certainly a more logical explanation than the one initially put forward by Esperon. After all, it is outrageous to think that one lawyer, however argumentative he existed, could manage to monopolize the energy and attention of the military to the extent that he made the escape possible. Had security been really tight, had the military really been strict about security, had the escapees really had only Palido lawyer to rely on, the escape would have been impossible. Simply surrounding the building with soldiers at the ready would have resulted in the apprehension of the escapees the moment they climbed out of their windows.

An obvious clue in point was the escape of Capt. Nicanor Faeldon who pretended that he was just going to buy fruits. When Faeldon escaped, what punishment, if any, was given to those who were supposed to guard him? After the four prisoners escaped, the consequences have been negligible: The commander of Fort Bonifacio has been relieved, yet, but what about Esperon? Shouldn't he assume some sort of command responsibility particularly since the military appears to have developed a severe inability to keep prisoners behind bars or even to stop Navy Lt. Antonio Trillanes from conveniently and dramatically issuing a challenge to the public issues before the escape?

Esperon may have reasons for supporting complicity on the part of Palido. However, he seems inclined to turn a blind eye to the possibility the escape was an inside job. Such an intimate murder of a whitewash. Could it be that the military top brass is afraid of further alienating lowers ranking officers and enlisted men? Or are they becoming uncertain about their ability to command the troops?

The Romans used to ask who would guard the guardians. Now that the guardians have demonstrated their inability to do their jobs, can they be trusted to investigate themselves? After all, the country is still waiting for the Mienzo report on the involvement of top military officials. Esperon among them, in alleged fraud during the May 2004 elections, isn't it?

As some of our readers see it

THERE TO GIVE OUR READERS A CHANCE TO be heard, especially those who have been subjects of previous columns. Here are a few of them.

AS I SEE IT

Neal H. Cruz

In the Jan. 16 column, following up a report that it was Speaker Jose de Venecia who was the unidentified behind the So-El provision of the Constitution drafted by the Constitutional Commission, I wrote that it was former Rep. Gerry Espina of Bohol who authored it. "Whether or not it was JDV who prodded Espina to make the proposal, only the two of them know," I said.

Espina sent a letter advising that he indeed was the proponent of the So-El provision, but adding that no one prodded him: "not even JDV."

About three years ago, when I was still a columnist, he wrote, "the issue proposed was months by me not considered by the Con-Com. Hence, when I proposed it in the Con-Com, it was not something new. Congressmen who were with me at the time can attest to this."

Espina also could not recall that although he (So-El) provisions were included in the draft charter, he eventually voted against the proposal to extend classes. "I believe that both the parliamentary system and bicameralism would be more destructive of our goals for development than No-El," he said. "No, I did not vote against it to blame for No-El but freely. Espina. But believe me, I had no interest or evil interest."

* * *

As the same column, I wrote that the first **term of the local government units to push** up Charter change was Gov. Boy Fernando of Kinder's fantasy. But he didn't want to realize **that when the parliamentary/federal system** of government they were pushing materialized, his own province and other poor provinces would be the hardest hit. In a federal government, I pointed out, local governments units will have to fend for themselves and can't rely on financial help from the national government. While a few LGUs can support themselves, many others, even provinces, cities and municipalities cannot and will probably end up taking their own **refinancing beyond their capacity to pay.**

Fourteen sent a text message saying his colleagues in the Senators League have changed their minds and are now against federalism.

"We are for more local autonomy and decent taxation," he said, "not federalism. On No-El, my proposal is to submit it to the people as a separate question in the plebiscite."

* * *

Last Jan. 4, I wrote a column on the redistricting proposals in a new Consultory Third Party Liability (CTPL) insurance scheme for private motor vehicles, following a lecture report on this car insurance and visit to the government of taxes under the present system. The Insurance Commission and the private insurance companies proposed a "clearing house" for all CTPL policies. The Government Service Insurance System (GSIS) proposed that it be the insurer and then it would reinsure the policies with reputable insurance companies.

Insular Life John, I wrote about a third proposal to organize a consortium of all insurance companies interested in the CTPL business. The consortium would act as the insurer for all of the companies, accept all payments and issue all the policies. Then it would divide equally the premiums paid to all the members of the consortium after matching the claims for the government. Claims of claims will also be divided equally among them.

Benjamin Santos, former commissioner of the Insurance Commission (IC), said a MOU proposing all motor vehicle insurance policies be issued also by the insurance with companies failed to members and to government agencies concerned. He criticized the "hasty decisionmaker" and GSIS proposals.

The "clearing house" requested by new Insurance Commissioner Eduardo Malaki. To not only reinforcement for forming purposes since the procedures will end by a final stop before the system is completed," Santos wrote. "Malaki reasonably fails to provide credibility to ensuring the objectives of public protection and efficiency. On cost-based income of CTPL policies by single insurance companies."

The "clearing house" concept, he added, is just another name for the PIRA model which has already been found to be deficient.

How about the GSIS model? In theory, it is the most practical because vehicle insurance premiums would be collected at the same time as the registration fees, said Santos. "However, it suffers from a fatal flaw: it is illegal for the GSIS to sell insurance to private vehicles. It may be done to private vehicle owners. The amount of remaining the business in the insurance industry can make it legal. Furthermore, the GSIS cannot legally collect taxes. And knowing the GSIS record, how can anyone expect that payment of insurance claims would be handled in an honest, timely and efficient manner?"

So how does the Insurance Commission would compare with the other three? This is Santos' answer:

"The concept can well be made up of highly-funds, licensed insurance companies monitored by an independently created. IT company to ensure (a) timely and correct payment of claims and taxes and (b) submission of report to the appropriate to all government agencies concerned. The consortium concept is simple: responsibilities and accountabilities are clear and enforceable. No politicking, good insurance technicalities and regulation."

* * *

TODAY'S JOKE: If the Constitution is to be amended, this provision should be included: 'Members of Parliament should have true names—one in the legislature and another one in real."

Patriotic whitewater rafting at Chico River

PASSION FOR REASON

Raul C. Pangalangan

NORTH LUZON COLLEGE DORMITORIES. I TOLD told that the best way to serve the people was to take to the hills and wage the struggle at the Cordilleras and the Sierra Madre. Now, decades later, I realize that aiding to the hills is one more difficult way to serve the masses, and that the war can be no one story. It will.

I'm a whitewater rafting in the mighty Chico River. Go local to your family members. To help the food way her industry. Be patient. Mind your Pinocchio. Mind those long, thin hands. Tagalog proverb, here we come.

Whitewater rafting is one of those adventure activities I had hoped to do. More than a few ago, I decided to take the plunge. Initially, and took my wife and kids on a Mountain Right to Tagaytay, he said. "No, sir," he said, after he got off the cell phone number of Amber Carig, charismatic movie and shaker of whitewater rafting in Chico since 1998. (He can be reached via e-mail at ambercarig@yahoo.ph, or in hand-held mobile.) He is one of the pioneers of whitewater rafting in the Philippines.

My term kayaking on Pinatubo River, which a kid by the Sierra Madre mountain range. He tells a cautionary anecdote, dated the rapids and prevailed. My youngest son, then in fifth grade, missed one of the big rapids because in the group, who snatched the waves and—which I would flip over and leave for myself when it feels to be in a vanishing machine's rapids cycle.

The next day, we went whitewater rafting on Chico, where headwaters come from Mt. Data and which flows down through the Cordillera mountains in Mountain Province and Kalinga. Amber briefed us fully about safety, and we were ready to begin the trip.

We explored the Gallao Cave which has its own "chapel" inside and a natural skylight. We went spelunking through The duckies. Lighter blows were last recommended for cleaning photos, which is to acknowledge and indigenous for guidance. At sundown, two crowd of the incident flight of bats, their chilly ritual as they fly out of their caves as bullet-like gusts as they scour the sky.

Comments to pascalupan@yahoo.com

US Embassy calls De Castro 'illiterate'

THE INQUIRER ON TUESDAY PUBLISHED excerpts from classified documents containing the US Embassy assessments of political developments in the Philippines in 2005 which were critical of the administration of President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo. These excerpts are said to be part of the 303 documents gathered from classified files of the Federal Bureau of Investigation by Lourdes Sta.Iglesia Ilarde, a former US Master of Filipino extraction, and leaked to the Internet by Jose Michael Ruiz Alquiros, a close associate of former Philippine National Police Director General (now Senator) Panfilo Lacson. The stolen documents are said to have been sent to opposition leaders, among them, former Senate President Juan Ponce Enrile, Senate Sen. Aquilino Pimentel Jr. and Rep. Rodolfo Biazon.

The US Justice Department has charged Ilarde earlier with "knowingly communicating classified information to a government employee or an agent or representative of a foreign country," which can result in a jail term of 10 years. Alquiros, who is not employed by US intelligence agencies in any past and present Philippine officials in an effort to destabilize the Arroyo regime.

The Inquirer story was based on an Associated Press report and has been picked up by other media in a series of reports; it was last October revealing diplomatic dispatches purportedly received from unnamed US Embassy sources.

Although Estrada, Pimentel, Lacson and Gobay have not acknowledged that they received e-mails from either Aquino or Aquinovilla, they have dismissed the leak as containing material widely known to the Philippine public. Lacson said the e-mail from Aquino contained articles about the "Philippine situation" and "were largely news that we receive in our local media."

The contents of the secret US Embassy analyses, judging from the published reports, show clearly fill from published news stories and do not reveal many secrets that were not known in the many political circles in the country at the time of the point. The case of spying against Aquinovilla and Aquino is built on existence of alleged documents of classified material from computers at the US Federal Bureau of Investigation.

What is striking is the AP report on Vice President Noli de Castro and the US Embassy assessment of President Arroyo. A classified embassy report dated July 2005 described the President as "a weak executive leader whose ineffectual leadership, allegedwidespread upbringing, overbearing personal style and inability to connect with ordinary Filipinos have kept her popularity ratings low in a country that reveres warm and outgoing personalities." It added that her husband was rumored to straddle corners of vote-buying, leaving her high many more spots in question, following her rise to power amid rumors of corruption and vote buying."

This assessment is basically accurate. Estrada, Lacson et al. could not have learned anything new from this assessment.

The other remaining element is the assessment of De Castro's fitness for the presidency. A classified FBC intelligence assessment dated Jan. 2005 is damaged: Info "We inquired about the biographer of Rudy Giuliani (mayor of New York during the Sept. 11, 2001 bombing attack) sitting atop a small stack of books on De Castro's desk and he said it was a gift and he hadn't read it ... There is no indication that De Castro has much knowledge of interest in foreign policy issues."

That does not make De Castro any worse than most Philippine officials in their familiarity with foreign policy issues. What Filipinos would have wanted to know more about De Castro is his biography, when most of them are more interested in reading Internet "blogs"? True, Giuliani emerged as a folk hero and was acclaimed by Time magazine as its "Person of the Year 2001" for his heroic interventions to put New York back on its feet after the devastating attack; but De Castro's indifference to Giuliani's biography should not be considered a cost of his literacy.

Still his reply must have affected the interviewer than the US Embassy in the case, nothing was more important to the United States than the war on terror in effort to stem the tide of the wounded United States was the primary concern of US policy and the test of friendship. Thus, the importance of knowing Giuliani.

But here post, when the US Embassy was assessing the political prospects of the future administration, which was being besieged by a crisis of legitimacy, there were more engaging and exciting books than Giuliani's biography. Among these are such more compelling books and instructive to Filipinos as the tasks of Coolidge, the Japanese Shogun and the new biographies of Attila the Hun, Genghis Khan and Boss Tweedie ("The Life of Your Favourite and His Place in the Times").

As well, Socrates is the father of famous French Caribbean logic that helps to understand the brilliant opposition by President Jacques Chirac's Prime Minister Dominique de Villepin at the UN to curtail/confine the US plan to invade Iraq as well as the dynamism of France's independent foreign policy.

The US Embassy dossiers are useful documents for study because they reveal more about US priorities and foreign policy biases more than the weaknesses of the Philippine political system and of the leaders of the country. It is not a disgrace not to read Goddard's biography.

What's more significant is that the stolen FBI files were seen in opposition leaders. The choice of recipients appears to have been motivated by a desire to embarrass the Arroyo administration. The US government viewed the Arroyo regime and used them to mount a challenge to her regime.

What could be

WHEN IT BECAME CLEAR THAT MICHELLE BACHELET had won Chile's presidential elections last Sunday, crowds poured into the streets in jubilation, cheering as she aided them rhetorically: "Who would have imagined 5, 10, 15 years ago, that Chile would elect a woman president?"

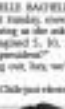
The Filipinos might respond by pointing out, hey, we've had two women presidents since 1986.

But let's look more closely at the woman Chile just elected.

Bachelet's father was killed by the Chilean military under Augusto Pinochet's bloody dictatorship. Her husband was one of the many political dissidents who were arrested, tortured and "disappeared" during the years of Pinochet's rule. Bachelet and her mother were both arrested and tortured, and then exiled. They were later able to return to Chile, where Bachelet joined the anti-dictatorship movement that eventually brought down Pinochet. Trained in a pediatric surgeon, she entered the new government as health minister and then defense secretary, a first for a woman in Chile's history.

PINOY KASI

Michael L. Tan



Even more amazing are details from her personal life. Bachelet is a Socialist, a single mother of three and an agnostic.

The more I thought about Chile's last election, the more I realized there's more to it than than an issue of gender. As we debate how or not to elect women to office, we tend to be using yardsticks if the problem is the form of government, or the social and cultural conditions that either allow or prevent us from making democratic governance a reality.

A common past

The Philippines shares much of a common past with Chile and Latin America. Like most countries in the world, Philippine history is marked by a long history of economic inequity and politics that alternates between repression and patronage. We also share the Latin tradition and its problems, from the system of *caudillos* (misnamed *trapos* here) to the military. Until the 1980s, we were of only three countries in the world without dictators. (If you're wondering, today there are only two: Malta and the Philippines.)

Certainly, there are important differences between Latin America and the Philippines. The Spanish enemies in Latin America revolted against Mother Spain early in the 19th century, meaning that independence movements in Europe did quite well; Argentina was one of the most economically advanced nations in the world at one time. Latin American countries, few of Spain, also allowed more liberal political and social philosophies to emerge.

The 20th century saw Latin American countries dogged by strong internal forces, from wealthy families spun off from time plotting against each other than on governance. The despots' power often depended on their ties with US multinational companies and the US government. Washington intervened constantly with local politics, supporting the most pro-American politicians and ousting the less cooperative.

Despite these problems, progressive politics flourished in many of the countries. In 1966, Chile elected a Socialist, Salvador Allende, as president. Then the United States launched a destabilization campaign that culminated in a military coup on Sept. 11, 1973. Allende was killed when the military bombed the presidential palace. Until 1990, Chile suffered in the hands of Pinochet and his brothers, with some 3,000 Chileans losing their lives.

After the dictators

We got rid of Marcos in 1986, while the Chileans ousted Pinochet in 1990. Since then, Chile has restored democracy to the full extent, while we have not.

Chile had strong democratic Left parties, including the Socialist Party that left the anti-dictatorship coalition. After they won in 1990, they formed a center-left political coalition, Concertación, that has led Chile through all the post-Pinochet years.

Under Concertación, Chile stabilized, politically and economically. Unlike us, the Chileans were unrelenting in bringing Pinochet to justice. Although the dictator went into exile in Europe, he was eventually extradited and is now under house arrest in Chile. It pursued free-market economics and respected political processes. Consecutive administrations developed their social welfare programs and Bachelet's victory came with pledges to strengthen these programs.

And the Philippines? We keep electing right-wing politicians who won't let go of power. We ape America with its drug-out-dog capitalism while turning lesser change to the past. We avoid never-ever outcomes like Bachelet because we still want to pretend we are a morally upright people, pro-family and pro-life, even as we send children out to beg in the streets, export their parents as cheap labor, allow foreign military troops to conduct war exercises on our soil and rape our women.

Chile is much the country, but Bachelet rode to victory on hard-won parliament's wins. When our analysts what happened, you realize Chileans voted for her not just because she was a woman but also because she stood for a political leadership that had governed well.

But can a person

At the individual level, Bachelet was voted into the highest office because she was a person. The news papers report that she rarely talked about her own traumatic Pinochet and her loss of her father or boyfriend. She was Michelle Bachelet, not the wife or daughter of some other powerful politician in bad boot the case with other women heads of state in Latin America and the Philippines.

When women interviewed her to see if she'd make a good presidential candidate, they asked what she was looking for in life. She was said to have answered: "To walk along the beach holding the hand of my lover." In a media interview, she talked about combining parenting with politics by describing what she does when her son calls, needing new pajamas: "It is not that you cancel your meeting, but after your day, you go to the supermarket to buy the supplies."

Show-biz politics? Maybe. But then our Presidents (on hand as well to be show biz and her answers would never come close to Bachelet's.

Again, this is not a gender issue. Chile tells us that against all odds, you can build a political system where voters recognize performance, rather than personalities, where women and men of substance can still win over traditional and moneyed politicians; Bachelet's main rival was a billionaire, the owner of LAN, Chile's largest airline.

The success of an individual in Chile's elections was incomplete. After crushing over Chile's election of a woman president, Bachelet would on to declare: "We have shown a country can be prosperous without losing its soul."

For Chileans, that statement was an affirmation of years of building a democracy. For Filipinos, especially for our economic elite, it's a statement that sounds like a challenge to be bolder as we imagine what could have been and what could still be.

Comelec officials should be charged

HARD TO BELIEVE, BUT NO LOWER LIMIT! People pointed out at a forum on electoral reform sponsored by the Black and White Movement (Nebumovement) on the occasion of the second anniversary of the Supreme Court decision on the "Comelec Modernization Issue," as the Senate Blue Ribbon Committee began on the same matter to conclude.

On March 31, 2005, the Supreme Court nullified the contract between the Comelec and the supplier of Automated Counting Machines, declaring what it called the "illegal and abusive acts of the Comelec in awarding P3.2 billion of public funds in ill-advised and illegal contract." Commission had been only decided the entire computerization and modernization of our electoral system.

In its decision, the Court directed the Office of the Ombudsman to "conduct its own investigation to determine if any of the public officials (and conspiring private individuals, if any)" involved in the deal. So a move report is underway by Senators Joseph Estrada, Panfilo Lacson and Juan Ponce Enrile, and Rep. Rodolfo Biazon. The report that would have forced the Comelec officials to be tried before the Sandiganbayan but Paul Institutions Mike Arroyo talked him out of it. This was the reason, said former Senate President Enrile, why Senator Miriam Defensor Santiago and Senate Majority Leader Francisco Tatad, a friend of Mr. Marcos himself, that Marcos chose to resign his post before his term was over. Salonga urged the Information Technology Foundation of the Philippines (ITFP), which filed the suit against the Comelec, to keep the pressure on the Ombudsman to declare the Ombudsman in contempt of the Supreme Court in light of its inaction on the Court's recommendation.

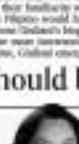
Senator Miriam Defensor's on-going sponsorship resumes (including an online petition) to compel the Comelec commissioners to voluntarily resign from the poll body with the supporters mushrooming to three over 600 signatories.

Sign the petition.

THE TROUBLE with calling for their resignation, though, is that it's all up to the commissioners to accede to the people's wishes—or not. There is no law that can force the officials to leave the country to anything to go by, we betcha can hold our breath until they decide to do the

AT LARGE

Rina Jimenez-David



right and honorable thing.

As members of a constitutionally protected body, as the constitution provision puts, the only way Comelec can be removed is by impeachment by the long, tedious and politically charged route of impeachment.

Roque, in his talk at the forum, hinged his disagreement with "conventional wisdom," though. "The Constitution does not provide immunity from suits in all impeachable officers," he asserted, "but only to the President." Going through legal jurisprudence, Roque said that beyond a recent Supreme Court ruling on an administrative case involving a Comelec commissioner that stated that even an impeachable official can and should be tried for an offense. Thus, the Ombudsman can assert absolute immunity from suit as grounds for inaction on the Supreme Court's order.

Is impeachment the only way to remove a Comelec commissioner? Roque asked. Officials, according to the Constitution, "may resign at any time." Who can charge the Comelec commissioners criminally for their acts to this account? and they will automatically be ousted out a 90-day suspension."

* * *

RED the need to rid the Comelec of its present board of commissioners, starting with Chair Benjamin Abalos?

Because, said Nicasio Bautista II of the Black and White Movement, "even if President GMA and Ben de Castro resign tomorrow, the country would still be in a lot of trouble if we hold elections with the present Comelec officials in charge."

The aim of the Black and White Movement, a broad coalition of civil society groups, Senators including Estrada, Lacson et al. could "[Ebb] Roll Bumps," for meaningful reforms in Philippine governmental and society, "Electoral reform is a crucial element," Bautista said, "but the political and credible elections time will not be possible unless the offender breaking the poll body are demolition reputable and honest."

Gus Lagman, who was president of the ITFP at the time it filed suit with the Supreme Court, puts it more succinctly: "Kailangan ng mga tao ng mga taong walang kinikilingan." Only people without ties to the Comelec commissioners can be free."

The goal of the petitioner—and the signatories there—is not to get elected just indicting and punishing the guilty; to restore public confidence in the elections. "Can we go on the line in this country because we allow it," says Lagman. If the commissioners manage to secure with their names and reputations intact... and if it becomes necessary to resign in order to save the country—then it needs a sad, familiar message to all Filipinos: Corruption pays and, worse, is rarely if ever punished.

* * *

A QUICK glance at the comments of Filipinos here and abroad who signed the online petition indicative the extent of public anger and disgust at the way our government and society have been allowed to degenerate. Some typical:

"I'd" declares: "Not only resignation, but the accused should be brought to justice and made to answer for their faults... if found guilty... appropriate punishment should be applied. Resignation is not enough! We should impose a greater disciplinary action on those involved. Let them rot in jail."The legislators weren't think of such a bill because their will be affected to a much greater degree!"

"We" has a much more radical proposition: "Let's do away with the corrupted Comelec officials to bring back dignity and honor to a shamed institution."

IDs and dignity

LOOKING BACK

Ambeth R. Ocampo

LOOKING AT THE PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE late Gabriel Casuncion on TV and in the newspapers made me realize how easy it is to track down people in this day and age. That is, if the method they easily want to track them down.

We have come a long way in terms of identification from the 19th century, when all one can and around was a piece of paper, actually a license for payment of taxation (or travel). But and now as a cedula. When Andres Bonifacio and Emilio Jacinto were hiding in the mountains of Laguna, both act of defiance of Spanish colonial rule, they were also getting rid of a way for the authorities to identify them when stopped at checkpoints.

In the tail-end of the Spanish period, photography was available in the Philippines, but it was not used for IDs or even "mug shots" for criminal records. Photographs were not used for IDs or even "mug shots" for criminal records. Photographs were costly, and only people like Jose Rizal had photographs from his student days to his execution, as we can now see in the museum bearing his name.

On the other hand, Andres Bonifacio only has one extant and blurred photograph. In this historic mug shot, the hero of the masses is not wearing the iconographic camisa de chino and is wearing civil pantalon. This is only photograph he ever had, a dark suit, wearing a necktie and, depending on the retouched photograph you are looking at, a carnation on his lapel.

A photograph was one way to be identified and identified. Benjamin Rizal, enlisted in the Spanish army during his internment. He only have one jacket and needed shot of him in his old age. When he died and could not complain or resist, they took a handful of shots of him lying in his coffin.

Without a photograph, it was easier to put out a dead man's eyes and claim he was someone else. In 1901, when American troops were trying to capture Gen. Miguel Malvar, they had no photograph nor iconographic sketch to disseminate, so this subterfuge was given:

"Complexion rather dark, weight about 140 pounds, about 5 feet 2 inches in height, short and stocky set, with small hands and feet, brown eyes, hair black with perhaps a few gray hairs, about 40 or 42 years old, wears a gold ring with a stone set on the third finger of the left hand, has a little broad, wears a 5 or 6 shot (often wearing about his face well shaped hands."

"He has a habit to gear long in front of his ears, giving an appearance of side whiskers. He usually wears a small black mustache, and while conversing with anyone is liable to fast his eyes in a peculiar way.

"Going about the country with an Indian shirt and trousers cut off or rolled up to the knee (to avoid detection). If captured will affect being very simple, inoffensive and ignorant native who knows nothing, and will give a varying name. Mouth large, nose ordinary, and slightly concealed. Philippine eyes, eyes blank. Sometimes chews betel nut."

Despite this detailed description, Malvar eluded the enemy for a long time, because Filipinos would not tell on him.

The 1903 cedula tax system contained the personal identity, residence, and profession. People still have cedulas in the 21st century but we don't use them as identification because we have so many alternative photo IDs today: school and office IDs, SSS/GSIS ID, driver's license, passport, voter's ID, senior citizen's ID and much more. All this can be confused and confusing, but the only consolation is that private security guards get their sense of being from our IDs. I received a not so different notice of the US armed forces: "No pass, no guest!" (All Hours) "No retreat, no war" (Army). Would you believe Philippine security guards have their own motto? "No ID, No entry."

Old passports used to ask about distinguishing features on a face. But this was before advances in dermatology and cosmetic surgery. When I asked my dermatologist if she would recommend removing the President's nose, her reply was that it was her most distinguishing feature and would require changing the description on her passport and other documents.

Alejandro Roces has some funny anecdotes about disguises during the martial law regime. Charnie Phuan had "colored a Muslim veil, Sultanate. Always get a passport using a fake name and house to fit to her."

Roces had to learn how "small, not round" affect (with a bathroom). One day, Sonny Alvarez came in with a bolo and asked that they be allowed to see the bathroom. So I said yes. I was a bit startled when the two of them entered the bathroom together. Sonny Alvarez said they didn't come out after a while. They stayed there for about three hours! My God, what were they doing there? I knocked and asked, 'What are you doing there?' The door swung open and Sonny came out with a bolo in his hand. It completely fell. The bath, fascinated to be one of Cecile's makeup artists in Peru. My God, you should have seen Sonny—he was so ugly. After this, they had to teach to have his photograph taken with his bolo. Have you ever heard of a passport photograph with a bolo? The bad boys that operate in that law. It was an ugly Sonny got through this Immigration people in the Manila International airport."

Identification is very advanced these days. We have finger printing, we have photos of faces, we have DNA and even the ultimate in identification: eyeprints. Disguises aren't worth anymore.

* * *

Comments are welcome at aocampo@inquirer.com.ph

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Justice for judges

LETTERS

WE, THE MEMBERS OF THE Las Piñas City Bar Association, join all peace-loving Filipinos in condemning the recent murder of Hon. Cirilo RTC Judge Hermelo Gregorio. These can be no better example of the criminal elements' disregard of order in our society than the killing of people who administer and dispense justice in our land.

We, therefore, urge the government to speed up the investigation of all unsolved killings of judges and lawyers, and to bring justice to the perpetrators, more especially the masterminds of these dastardly crimes, before the law of justice. In this regard, we strongly support the idea of Chief Justice Artemio V. Panganiban for the creation of a special unit in the Department of Justice that will focus on solving such murders.

Finally, we ask our fellow members of the Philippine Bar to unite so that our collective voice will be heard, loud and clear, in defense of the rule of law and administration of justice.

—JESTINA A. MELEN
PBO Las Piñas City Bar Association,
1 Apollo 1, Moonwalk, Las Piñas City

Inquirer's uplifting stories

I THANK THE INQUIRER FOR RUNning uplifting stories on its front page. I've been avoiding reading newspapers lately, especially because I usually have the opportunity to read only during mealtimes. The gruesome stories of crimes, tragedies, corruption scandals and political backstabbings are not appetizing.

But I was pleasantly surprised by stories like "Boss a 'kasapin' farmer becomes 'Dr. Lee'" (FEB. 1/5/06) It brought tears to my eyes. Stories like this restore the Filipino's faith in humanity and do much more good than a thousand reports on what this politician says about that other politician.

I hope to see more stories like this become boring with groups like Inquirer Handog sa Manila, Bantuan, SPOT and Bayanihan Philippines. I see people who are making a difference in our country every day, and I always wish that more people would see what a lot of good people are doing with great success.

I—like many others, I'm sure—am positively affected by such people whose selfless deeds, I think, inspire us to do whatever we can to help those who are less fortunate than we are, with whatever we have. Once again, a big thank you to the Inquirer.

—CHRISTINA ALEXANDRA
fmx@pacific.net.com

Eight VAT charges in electric bill

I JUST RECEIVED MY MERALCO billing for Dec. 15, 2005, and counted eight value-added tax billings.

VAT for prepaid charge, VAT for transformer charge, VAT for SL charge (whatever that is!), VAT Power Act Rule, VAT for Dist & Sales (again, whatever that is), VAT Sales, VAT on rental, VAT Reimpo.

WHAT about VAT for footing?

From a 70-year-old widow getting P1,000 from the Social Security System, enough to pay for Meralco billings and its VATs.

—PABLO DELACASTA
publicsafety7@yahoo.com

SC committed to four 'ins'

IN HIS LETTER TO THE EDITOR, retired Col. Ludovic Jesus Asuncion asks "The Supreme Court. Isn't it noticeable exactly how much in favor and in grants the Inside Court got."

The answer is simple: the Supreme Court never got any favors or grants directly from international or foreign banking agencies. It was the Philippine government, through the Department of Finance, that secured those funds, which were in turn allocated for judicial reforms.

Furthermore, none of these funds were used precisely to ensure the independence of the judiciary. International institutions, like the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank and the European Union, are interested in independent and credible judiciaries in the whole world, not only in one country because they believe that their primary mission of promoting economic development cannot be attained with-out independent and credible judiciaries.

In no event, Chief Justice Artemio V. Panganiban is committed to a judiciary that is dedicated to the rule of law and characterized by true "ins": independence, integrity, intelligence and industry under an environment of transparency. He will not allow judicial independence to be compromised in any manner.

—ISRAEL G. KRAS JR.,
deputy court administrator and chief
Public Information Office,
Supreme Court,
Padre Faura Street, Manila

Uncharted waters

VOICES ON INQ7.NET

Former President Gerson Aquino is correct. The moral issue is the No. 1 problem in our country. Without moral rectitude, the country will remain in the muds pit.

Please, Madam President, set a good example for future leaders of our country. Be like the leaders of Japan and South Korea who resign once there is a perception or allegation of moral indirection.—Ing Guzmán, 0916.xxx@icloud.com

It's really reassuring to hear former President Ramos bring to (full) Filipinos' attention to quit by 2007. [But] what suffers by [does to] us [those] unpalatable words is the highest official of the land? Remember he's retired, and all officials and staffers to his cronies are also retired. He's an ordinary citizen like us.

To be [at] the forefront of battle is like wearing double knit pants in the age of Levi's ironing.—Rodolfo Salazar, jun@yeel-health.com

Whenever a crisis occurs, politicians always refer to the Constitution, not for guidance but to see what's wrong [with it]. It happened to the 1935, 1973 and 1986 Constitutions, aside from the first Fundamental Law in 1899, both their provisions being amended many times to suit the powers that be.

As for administration of Mr. Arroyo [is] being rocked with scandal, again the Constitution is being changed to suit the powerful.

The Constitution was adopted by a sovereign person and can be amended only by that power: the Filipino people. [It's not] the Constitution [that] needs to be changed but the elected officials. Do-it-is for the[ones], not nation-builders.—Hedda Aragon, jun@yeel-health.com

We must not blame GMA but the system and culture of Filipino-style rule of by the politicians and not for them.

[Shifting] to a parliamentary system and how hope for the best? Impeachable political leadership potential to become a future good prime minister and/or president, and inspire moral change to reform the political and social and economic ills of the country.—Harold Agustillo, manager@worldshipsun@yahoo.com

We do not need a change of government. What we need is a change of heart [among] the people running the country so that they will truly work for [in] betterment.

We all should be vigilant and stop corrupting the system ourselves. We all have a hand in building whatever our country is today.—Ricky Reyes, California, USA

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Across the NATION

Photojournalist's killer draws death sentence

By Jaime R. Bolanoy
INQ Regional Bureau

CEBU CITY—A CEBU REGIONAL TRIAL COURT yesterday imposed the death sentence on an alleged drug pusher for killing local photojournalist Allan Dizon in 2004.

Judge James Gako Jr. of RTC Branch 5 found Edgar Belandres of Binaungan (corpus, gulf) of murder based on the testimony of two witnesses—one against eleven and a sidewalk vendor—who saw Belandres on the gunman.

Dizon, 36, a reporter-photographer of The Freeman daily and its sister publication Cebuana Bayan News, was killed near RRCG Cebu on May 27, 2004, at 6:50 p.m.

The victim was standing on the sidewalk across a car wash outlet when the lone assailant shot him three times in the head, chest and back. He died on board once at the Cebu City Medical Center.

"Salbo ko. Wala, salamat (Thank you)" relied Dizon's wife on Anselica after the verdict was read.

"I am very happy with the decision... At last justice has been served to Allan," she later told reporters.

A week after his death, members of a task force assigned to handle the Dizon murder case arrested Belandres, a neighbor and friend of the victim's, in Lutopan, Talisay, where they grew up.

Police claimed that Belandres, allegedly a notorious drug pusher operating in the community, got mad at Dizon for shooting the police about his illegal activities.

Police believed that Belandres was the same person identified only as "Eli" who sent a text message to Dizon before he was killed. He referred to Dodong Bantug, nickname of Belandres, police said.

Based on the text message, Eli asked Dizon to go to the car wash outlet.

Belandres denied the charges, claiming he was at his family's meat shop in Lutopan at the time. His lawyers, Rambo Pap and Lester Sales, said they would appeal the ruling.

Judge Gako said in his decision read before a jampacked court that he "has no reason to doubt the prosecution witnesses that they were present during the incident" and saw Belandres shoot Dizon.

More than 30 journalists, mostly from the provinces, have been killed since 1986, prompting international journalists' groups to put the Philippines in their list of most dangerous places for journalists.

Last week, a former broadcaster of Radio Veritas in Legazpi, George Sarmiento in December last year surrendered to police to clear his name.

Roberto "Ompy" Jagdon, a former George Sarmiento on Dec. 1, 2005. NBI is expert from Olympian Magsalikaan, NBI Visayas Bureau

Telegrams face extinction in Cordillera areas

BAGUIO CITY—"SEND ME money. Economy no hours."

The simple message for telegram transmission posted in a telecommunications office here still remains the most economical, in along with the single address used for letter writing.

Clients in the Cordillera still snap hearing the "Morse, Morse" sound of Morse coding as the machines will be phased out this year to give way to modern systems, according to Wilfred Quines, acting chief for administration and finance of the Commission on Information and Communications Technology (CICT) in the Cordillera.

Quines said despite the arrival of short messaging system (SMS) on cellular phones and Internet, telegraph technology remains relevant.

But not all places in the hinterlands are accommodate computers and cellular phone technology because of their terrain.

"But we are doing a paradigm shift in our communications environment by going digitally on our phasing out the telegraph stations to install computers or Internet cafés in every town in the region," he said.

He said the computers will offer the telegraph clientele in the Cordillera. The only problem is installing the new system is connecting this through cable or satellite, he added.

However, communications officials are thinking of using Wi-Fi as a substitute.

Ideally each town is to have three units of computer in connection where all modes of communications as going to be centralized like in the telegraph system.

"We are now moving on to that direction. We have already organized computers from our CICT. This is not only going to happen in the Cordillera but to the whole country," Bocos said. Cagayan regions have already started modernizing their systems," Quines said.

There are 39 telegraph stations that have single sideband machines in Cordillera such as those in Mt. Province, Apayao, Benguet, Ifugao, Kalinga and Abra and Baguio City.

Although the technology is old, the single sideband machines are easier to maintain since parts are still available in the local market, Quines said.

He said they closed 14 stations last year due to the financial crisis. Three stations only earned P500 or less in a month, he said. Delvyn Cabua

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Asean ministers back antiprostitution bid

DAVAO CITY—THE 10-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) vowed to rid the region of child prostitution and the sex industry as a whole.

In a joint statement released after the 9th Meeting of Asean's Tourism Ministers (ATM) on Tuesday, the leaders said they would support a regional education campaign as a unified approach to fight sexual exploitation of children in tourism destinations.

The campaign is being led by the Child Wise International.

The international media consistently ranked Asean nations as top tourist destinations and resorts with thriving prostitution nodes.

Philippine Tourism Secretary Joseph Durano said the tourism ministers agreed that prostitution, if not covered, would be detrimental to tourism. "We all share the same sentiments that failure to protect the rights of women and children in the long run is not good for the tourism industry," he said.

Durano said the ministers understood that prostitution was damaging to the industry. Stopping it would spur the growth of the Asean tourism industry, he said.

Tourist arrivals in Asean countries rose by over 4.7 percent in 44 million in 2003, from 36On. Jody Quiroz, PDI Mindanao Bureau

PHILIPPINE Army soldiers, escorted by the head of mortuary affairs of the US Army in Korea, Al McFarland (center), carry the US flag-draped coffin of Army Sgt. Myla Maravillosa in Inabanga, Bohol, during burial rites for the Filipino-American soldier who died in the line of duty in Iraq. EDDIE SAN LUIS (PDI)

Fil-Am soldier receives full US military honors

By Chito Fuentes,
Visayas Bureau
and Oliver Teves, AP

INABANGA—FIRST COMPLAINT of the five Filipino-American women soldiers killed in Iraq buried her comrades Thursday with full US military honors in the tiny village where she grew up before migrating to America nine years ago.

A Roman Catholic chapel near the childhood home of Army Sgt. Myla Maravillosa in the village of Tiwi in central Inabanga was too small to accommodate the hundreds of people who attended the funeral Mass.

A contingent of US Army honor guards, led by Brig. Gen. Gregory Schumacher, provided traditional military honors, while Bohol Gov. Erico Aumentado directed all Philippine flags flown at half-staff in the entire province.

Schumacher, commander of the Military Intelligence Readiness Command at Fort Belvoir, Virginia, described Maravillosa as a "true Filipino-American hero" who "represented the very best of the qualities that we desire in our soldiers and indeed represented the very best of humanity itself."

"The ties between the United States and the Philippines are deep and enduring and she is a symbol of that very strong relationship," he said.

Schumacher knelt, assembled at the muddy ground, as he offered the folded US flag that draped Maravillosa's coffin to her mother Estelita, together with her daughter, US military medals, including the Bronze Star, the Purple Heart and the Meritorious Service Medal.

White balloons

Relatives and friends released white balloons with the message, "We will always remember, we will love you forever." Estelita clutched the US flag and watched quietly as people wept.

"What sorrows I have seen, I have to accept because that is her fate," Estelita said as she draped Maravillosa's coffin in her shoulder a cause...for the freedom of the whole world."

Provincial administrator Tomas Mapa said Maravillosa "died an honorable death in an important war" against terrorists, which is also plaguing the Philippines.

Maravillosa moved to Hawaii when she was 14 to join her mother, who migrated in 1996. She attended college in Oklahoma and enlisted in the US Army Reserves in 1999.

On Christmas Eve, Maravillosa's Humvee was attacked by Iraqi insurgents firing rocket-propelled grenades, severely wounding her, according to the US defense department.

Maravillosa, an interrogator assigned to the 205th Military Intelligence Battalion, had been in Iraq for only a little more than a month.

Tasks

She was the first Filipino-American woman soldier to die in Iraq. At least one other Philippine-born US soldier has been killed in Iraq since 2003.

Her grade school teacher, Dulce Bernal, said she could not imagine "this cute, gentle girl, so sweet with a cruddy smile" joining the Army and marching off to war.

"Soon of as thought or even just dreamed that one (village woman) ever produces such a heroine," Bernal said with amazement, serving as the text of her life," Bernal said.

At 8:10 a.m., the white hearse that carried her American flag-draped casket arrived at the Ong's Inabanga Cemetery in Chapel.

Villagers emerged from houses and stores around the chapel grounds.

Seven American soldiers in full green Army uniforms carried the coffin into the 200-seat capacity chapel as the crowd marched, waiting for the go-signal to be allowed inside according to a predetermined seating arrangement.

Three Philippine Army soldiers, in their official camouflage uniforms, assisted the American soldiers.

A bugler and drums have been requested by Aumentado to take part in the rites for Myla who finished elementary in the Ong school.

The chapel was nearly adorned with white, yellow and pink gladiolus, Asiatic lilies and Poland roses from local to from Cebu.

Among those who paid tribute to Myla were Officer Abraham Guillermo of the US Army's 80th Military Intelligence Group and Brig. Gen. Gregory Schumacher, commander of the Army Reserve Intelligence Readiness Command.

While the crowd outside the chapel had grown restless during the proceedings, which lasted more than three hours, others alternately prayed through the chapel's doors or listened to sounds.

The coffin was brought out of the chapel at noon, as the chapel sound system blared the song "It's In The Journey." Myla's favorite song sung by Michael Card.

At the Ong homepage, crowning an American bugler, with his cream-colored hair, the Philippine Air Force played the tagalong tune 120 soldiers lined the 25-gun salute.

The ceremony was over in 11 minutes.

It was only when the coffin was inserted into one of five vacant vaults in the family mausoleum where her grandfather was buried, that the wailing started.

The wailing grew faint at 51 white balloons were released into the overcast sky.

The Way You Look Tonight
When I Fall In Love
One Winter Love
I Will Love You
Unchained Melody
Graduation Day
No Other Love
You'll Never Walk Alone
The Wonder of You
Young Love
Love Is A Many Splendored Thing
Time To Cry
Walk On By
She Cried
It's All In The Game
Seventh Dawn
Softly As I Leave You
I Believe
Venus
Portrait Of My Love
If Ever I Would Leave You
You've Lost That Loving Feeling
Sealed With A Kiss
Bad Bloody For A Blue Lady
The Things We Did Last Summer
Turn Turn Turn
I Only Have Eyes For You
Moon River
Wichita Lineman
More
The Impossible Dream
Up Up & Way
Going Out Of My Head
The Look Of Love
Never My Love
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2 firms could face raps for illegal wells

By Blanche S. Rivera

TWO WELL-KNOWN ESTABLISHMENTS in Ortigas Avenue, a long stretch that straddles San Juan town and Quezon City, have been illegally operating water wells from which tenants, shoppers and employees, enough to supply the community in about 1,000 households in the area, the National Water Resources Board (NWRB) said yesterday.

The NWRB said it gave officials of the Greenhills shopping center and the Mendoza complex until tomorrow to submit an affidavit that they have shut down their deep wells which have been operating illegally for an undetermined period. If they fail to do so, the NWRB said it would permanently seal their deep wells and file charges against them for violating the Water Code.

Alihpala said Mendoza was operating an estimated 20,000 cubic meters a month through its illegally constructed deep wells, enough water supply for 800 families. Greenhills Shopping Arcade, on the other hand, extracts about 12,000 cubic meters, good for 480 families.

"Both companies have continued to ignore notices from the NWRB to stop using their illegal deep wells or outline their usage from Manila Water," Alihpala said. The NWRB had received a tip last year that Mendoza had been sourcing its water from the unregistered deep well. Mendoza has refused to allow NWRB people into the compound for inspection but the agency has pictures of the illegal well, the NWRB said. Mendoza has asked the NWRB to extend its deadline so the company could file a motion for reconsideration. The NWRB has said no to the request.

"If they want to file a motion for reconsideration, they should file it by Jan. 31," Alihpala said.

The NWRB, an attached agency of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, has launched a drive against 1,300 illegal deep well operators in Metro Manila where operations threaten the water supply.

Contacted for comment, Greenhills Center General Manager Jerry Lanuza said they were not aware of the NWRB deadline tomorrow. "We only have one deep well in operation which has a water permit. A water permit was denied for another well we had built as a backup. We told the NWRB that we respected their decision. We are now capping and shooting down this new well, and the permit should be over by next week," he said.

The Mendoza office could not be reached for comment.

11 hurt in Pasig road accident; truck mishap causes Makati traffic jam

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr. and Tarra V. Quismundo

TWO TRUCKS WERE INVOLVED in separate accidents yesterday, leaving 11 persons injured in Pasig City and causing a huge traffic jam in Makati.

In the first incident, 11 persons, most of them students on their way to school, were hurt yesterday in a four-vehicle mishap on Meyer Ignacio Boulevard in Pasig City.

The police said an 18-wheeler truck, which had just unloaded boxes of fish at a nearby market, rammed into a passing tricycle.

Because of the impact, the tricycle hit another tricycle, which also rammed an owner-type jeep parked just nearby.

The tricycle crashed into a bus stop, injuring the two tricycle drivers and two children injured, PO2 Normandy Maglo told the investigators.

Prosecutor Del Castillo, 51, the driver of the truck, told the traffic investigators that the truck's steering suddenly malfunctioned before he hit the tricycle, hurling drivers Rolando Ardales, 44, Ramil Ardales, 31, and Rolando Ardales Jr., 14, to the ground.

The bus carrying students was owned by Gil Transport Inc. and was driven by Rolando Ardales Jr., the police said.

The students were on board Gilda's tricycle were brought to the Pasig City General Hospital.

Four of them—Hilda May Abante, 15; Mark Anthony Abante, 14; Candy Mella, 13; and John Ray Quintos, 13—were released later in the day.

But Rayann Landa, 11, remained at the hospital. He sustained serious head injuries, Maglo said.

The students in the second accident—Jessica Ramos, 15; Mary Ch Aparre, 13; Mary Jo Aparre, 13; and an unidentified boy—were brought to the Rizal Medical Center in Pasig City, the police said.

Their driver, Ernesto Ariola, 34, was treated at the hospital for minor injuries.

In Makati City, another 10-truck fall of gravel tipped over on its side at dawn yesterday on the Osmeña Highway causing a traffic jam that lasted for hours along Edsa's southbound lane, up to Ortigas Avenue.

The impact caused the truck to lean to the left, before the vehicle fell over on its side and spilled its load of gravel onto the road, said Jovanher's District Traffic Enforcement Group chief, Supt. Rogelio Martinez.

NATIONAL Bureau of Investigation Officer-in-Charge Nestor Mantaring (seated, center) shows those he seized from Erik Eder Adarey Maudlin, alias Eduardo Mallari Obsioco Buriga, and Renato Ko Sicera (behind) yesterday. ALEC GUEVARA

Fake agents nabbed using NBI office

By Marjoue C. Ortiz

THEY BEAT THE LEGITIMATE TENANTS TO the last drawer's curve in Antipolo City.

After eyewitness operations, the National Bureau of Investigation's (NBI) Anti-Organized Crime Division (AOCD) arrested on Wednesday three jobless men posing as agents at the NBI's proposed satellite office.

NBI officer in charge Nestor Mantaring identified the suspects as Erik Eder Adrao, alias Eduardo Mallari, of Sta. Rosa, Manila; Glenalen Buriga, of Cainta, Rizal; and Renato Balmores, of Antipolo City. The other suspect—Mart Magbiu, Gene Coronado, Nilgilo Cortes, Bayet Cambaya, an alias Ekardo, and a John Doe—remain at large. NBI agents headed by lawyers Gene Bonifacio also seized five shotguns, 10 .38 caliber revolvers and three two-way radio units from the suspects.

"Our people haven't even begun moving to the proposed NBI satellite office," Mantaring said. "Apparently, these people were able to bait us [even] new quarters."

The Antipolo city government had offered the building, occupied previously by the Philippine National Police, to the NBI last year.

Joke not funny for parents, kids

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

THIS WAS ONE JOKE THOUSANDS OF ANXIous parents who rushed to or learn on public schools in Muntinlupa City point by hearing did not find funny.

Parents across the city panicked after minutes and radio stations reported a bomb threat at a public school earlier to the day. Classes were cancelled in many schools in the city after parents rushed to fetch their children from school.

Special Weapons and Tactics operatives of the Muntinlupa police department quickly secured the schools for bombs but found none, city police chief Senior Supt. Alfonso Mijares told the bosses.

Patrol 117, an emergency hotline, reportedly received a call from an unidentified caller at about 8:30 a.m. yesterday saying a bomb had been planted at the Alabang na Paaralang ng Sinpaid Gonzales building in Barangay Mawayo. This is the fourth time in the last six months that the school received a bomb threat, said Velasquez.

"We were surprised when parents revealed to our guards and said they wanted to bring their children home," said Ednapie Rodriguez Elementary School teacher Rowena Ignacio. "We had no choice but to suspend our classes," she added. Four other elementary schools and another high school faced the same situation.

Pranksters could have made the calls as politicians were about to conduct an anti-crime drive yesterday, according to authorities.

MetroBriefs

Slay suspect arrested

THE MAIN suspect in the killing of a fish trader at the Navotas fish port last year has been arrested, Navotas police chief, Supt. Romeo Tabajonda, said. Sunny Ibanga III, of Barangay Obando, was arrested recently as he was making up Lapu-Lapu St., North Bay Boulevard South. "We almost lost him as he was also stabbed and killed Ismail Cuenca, a businessman in the fish port," Tabajonda said. The police said their main target was the mastermind behind the killings of Cuenca. Cuenca was carrying some P1 million in cash and checks when four men approached him to join the fish port. When they tried to take the bag, witness Ramonang was fatally, he stabbed and was shot dead by the suspects. Nancy C. Carvajal

QC mayor bans fixers

BACON City-led employees are now banned from "fixed-carrying" business per bid applications, loans or tax payments. And first to get rid of fixers, and another thing, no more "fix-law-ups." In a memorandum circular, Quezon City Mayor Feliciano Belmonte Jr. has prohibited all city government employees from performing any [illegible] agreement.

Now like applications for business licenses and tax payments, or applications for building, electrical, health, occupational and sanitary permits, among others. He warned that any employee found guilty of violating the directive face administrative and criminal sanctions. JU Tiu

Traffic-free Valenzuela

THE all-[illegible] City government has signed an agreement with the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) and the Manila North Tollways Corp. (MNTC) which will hopefully address the city's traffic problems. The agreement was signed last Wednesday by Valenzuela City Mayor Wherlito Sandoval, DPWH Undersecretary Manuel M. Domingo and MNTC President Oscar Lopez. Under the agreement, the city government, in cooperation with the MNTC and DPWH, will carry out improvements on streets approaching the Valenzuela Interchange, particularly along Gen. Luna and Mendiola roads. Nancy C. Carvajal

PCCHS Class '63 reunion

THE PHILIPPINE College of Commerce High School Batch '63 will celebrate its 43rd anniversary with a 3-day out-of-town reunion on Jan. 21 to 23, at the Mercator Foundation Inc. Seamanship Center in Talisay, Batangas. Assembly time is 8 a.m. at the parking lot at the back of the Cultural Center of the Philippines near the CCP. Pasay City. Registration starts at 11:30 a.m. For inquiries, please call Salvacion Cordoba-Bruce at 5711345/5115409 or Elizabeth Mendoza-Amigos at 5736881.

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Morales can't remember a heavy Pacquiao punch

By Recah Trinidad

LAS VEGAS—IF THERE'S one fighter who had hit him hard, real hard, Erik Morales said it definitely was not knockout star Manny Pacquiao of the Philippines.

ERIK Morales (right) avoids eye contact with Manny Pacquiao (left) as he arrives for a news conference in Las Vegas Wednesday. AP

What they should, shouldn't do

By Recah Trinidad

LAS VEGAS—MANNY PACQUIAO PROnounced Pack-kay-ow) is "fast, fast, fast and gets out of the gate quickly to charge at his opponent in a hell-bent-for-leather manner. He moves in behind a sharp right jab, allows absorbing it up, then delivers with equal swiftness left—his bulking hooks and uppercuts—which, in range, tend to be effective. He possesses boundless energies, enabling him to maintain his relentless attack throughout."

Erik Morales?

El Terrible "possesses an excellent and hard left jab and a long, hard right cross. Coupled with his height advantage and excellent counter-punching abilities, he could correct these problems into an advantage over the slower Pacquiao, who needs to leave himself open. He has some of tough retaliators, proven in the 12th round of his first fight with Pacquiao, where he gave as much as he got."

Those sharp points, aired you, are not from a pen hellbent on rebuke analysis. They were from Bert Randolph Sugar, author of "Boxing's Greatest Fighters" (published by Barnes & Noble and Amazon.Com) and dubbed to be members of the foreign media in yesterday's presser at the Mirage Ballroom in Wynn Las Vegas.

The same pamphlet detailed what each fighter must do to win.

PACQUIAO: Must never assure—force his opponent to a "surprise"—entering any top-and-bottom Morales' backwards, against the ropes, into corners; must keep his hands up to thwart counters and move into range behind his right jab; must draw Morales into a slugfest, as he did in the 12th round of their first fight when he sharpened him; must add maneuverer and weight both to his arsenal.

MORALES: Must get to grips and use his advantage in height; use his longer (and straighter) left jab to maintain control as he did to the middle rounds of the first match; must move on Pacquiao who can breathe with his movement, keeping busy at long range or mid-ring, not back into the ropes; must not afford to engage in a slugging match; must fight a disciplined fight, continually turning Pacquiao, countering and moving; must keep Pacquiao off-balanced.

Meanwhile, odds at the sports book at Wynn Las Vegas, main sponsor of "The Battle," have remained even at the close of betting hours yesterday; no significant shift since Monday.

There's a prevailing feeling the fight won't go the full 12 rounds.

NOTICE TO THE PUBLIC

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SOLAR SPORTS

Pacman, El Terrible promise great fight

By Sabrae L. Lagumbay
Contributor

LAS VEGAS, NEVADA—WITH THE boxing gloves issue finally settled, Manny Pacquiao and Erik "El Terrible" Morales faced the media yesterday at the Wynn hotel here for their official press conference of the fourth-round bout.

"Both of us will give you a great fight," Pacquiao said in English, the only boxer to speak the language at the podium. "I thank all my people, my team, and the President of my country for their support."

Trainer Freddie Roach also indicated that Pacquiao will be at his best and there will be no excuses after the fight.

"We're ready for Saturday," Morales said through an interpreter. "It's going to be a difficult fight."

Nevada State Athletic Commission chair Marc Ratner told the boxers earlier that Morales' camp has decided to go back to using Erik's favorite Winning gloves, while Pacquiao will use Grant Boxes, the pounders' gloves.

Pacto regains lead with Carito

By Manang R. Castillo

PACTOLERO: Back in front despite a 73.

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Miñoza 4 shots off with 72 in Karachi

MIÑOZA

KARACHI—STEPHAN FRANCIS Miñoza matched par 72 while Team Titos rookie Jhon Pagsanan flashed tremendous promise by opening with a 73 in the Pakistan Open golf championship Thursday.

The two Filipinos seemed poised to make it as the top 67 players who will proceed to the weekend play after Friday's round along with Tony Lascuña and Artemio Murakami who secured identical scores over par 73s.

Miñoza had eleven of 24-38 at the par-72 Karachi Golf Club course, his round spoiled by a double bogey on the par-5 13th.

Pagsanan, who easily handled the Asian Tour qualifying school last week, was two over after three holes but rallied to get down to even par with three holes left after birdies on the 15th, 11th and 16th holes.

But he bogeyed the 18th to finish with a 38-37 card. His other bogeys came on the first, third and 12th holes.

Cookie Lelli teamed also hopes of qualifying with a 75 along with Gerald Bandoc and Pedri Casas, who had 76s. Angelo Que carded a 77 like Jeremie Detiveris, also an Asian Tour Qualifying School this year.

Juvi Millhar Singh, Amandeep Johl and Ashok Kumar of India shared the lead with Australian Hal Sherwin with 68s.

Nuggets thwart Cavs

UPSIDE DOWN: Kim Clijsters

NEW YORK—CARMELO ANTHONY AND EARL Boykins bagged 17 points each to contribute another big effort from Cleveland's LeBron James in leading the Denver Nuggets to a 90-86 victory over the Cavaliers in Colorado on Wednesday.

Once again, James paced the Cavs with a game-high 24 points, 11 rebounds and nine assists but missed a pivotal free throw with less than a second remaining to steal the slumping Cavaliers an early 89th consecutive defeat.

Reinsert Mackili and Eduardo Najera contributed 16 points apiece to the Denver total as the Nuggets picked up their third straight win and seventh in nine outings.

Trailing 90-87 James was fouled sending him to the foul line where he hit his first of two shots (unsuccessfully missed the second) leaving the Cavaliers down.

James was fouled again sending him back to the foul line with a chance to send the game to overtime.

The Cavaliers all star sailed his first shot but snatched his second clang off the rim, giving the Nuggets the victory.

The Nuggets took command early racing to a 28-14 first quarter lead but saw their advantage trimmed to 48-43 by the half.

After three quarters the Denver lead was reduced to 71-70 but the Nuggets managed to make the one point advantage hold up over the final 12 minutes.

In Atlanta, Chauncey Billups scored 23 points and Richard Hamilton added 22 as the Detroit Pistons romped to 117-90 rule over the Hawks in a match between the NBA's best and worst teams.

Reuters

COMPLETE RESULTS: Detroit 117, Atlanta 90; Indiana 93, Charlotte 82; Orlando 106, Washington 88; Miami 99, Philadelphia 86; Boston 102, Minnesota 96; New Orleans 91, Memphis 79; San Antonio 86, Milwaukee 82; Chicago 108, New York 104 (OT); Dallas 102, Houston 78; Denver 90, Cleveland 86; Portland 98, Toronto 96; Phoenix 110, LA Clippers 102.

NBA ON TV: The Los Angeles Lakers and the Sacramento Kings meet Rick Fahay in the North Division tilt at 11:30 a.m. here on ESPN Sports.

Solar Sports will air the Detroit-New York bouts at 8 a.m. with a replay at 8 p.m.

Tour 2006 registration

REGISTRATION FOR the Philippine National Cycling Association's (PNCA) two-day qualifying races for the 2006 tour of Filipinas is ongoing. Interested cyclists may register at the PNCA office at the Amoranto Sports Complex in Quezon City, according to PNCA president Paquito Rivas. For inquiries, call 9046-2924/922. The qualifying races coincide with Tagaytay City's Philippine Day duathlon tomorrow. It will mark the 11th. The PNCA and Tagaytay City Mayors Newborn Tenorio agreed on the qualifying races.

NCA World tournament

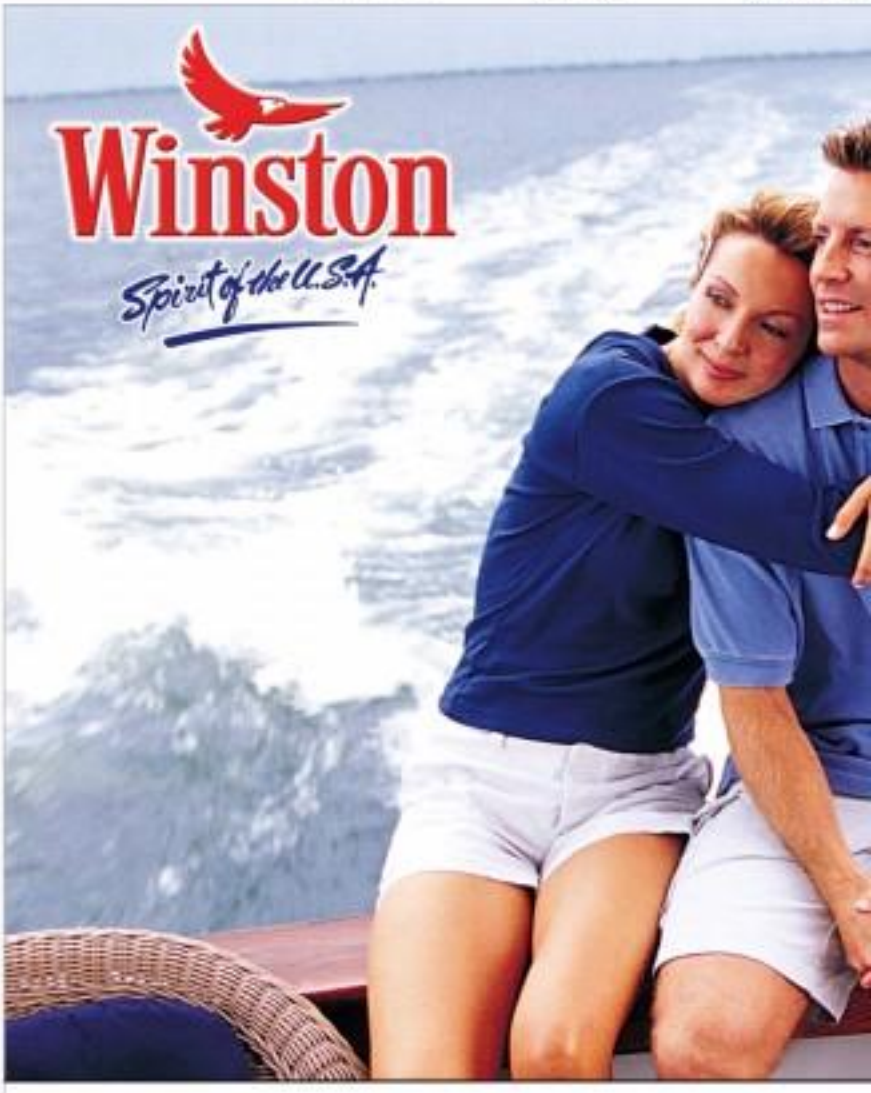
A WIDE OPEN RACE for the fifth crowning 49 qualifiers is expected to go to the championship round of the NCA World Championship 8-cock derby at the San Juan Coliseum. The first of 49 world class fights will be unleashed at 4 p.m. Among teams vying for the crown are the entries of Gene Bato of Sunset Promotional Dist., Jun Tayactac, Patrick Antonio, the team of Pag-Asa Builders, Cebu 1 Gold and Rep. Ronnie Perez, Citadel Builders, Richard Burns and Jerry Palmares, Jimbo Lee and Jr Magsaysay, Gov. Ito Fresnis, former OIC-Governor Jun Ventura, Efren's Store of Batasan Group, Archey Manalpac, Pino Sison, and Dacon Building.

Pasay 4-cock derby today

ABOUT 50 MAIN PACE and exciting conditions are in store tonight at the air-conditioned Pasay City Cockpit via the special 4-cock derby. Sponsor is Sagupan Corporation. With the entry fee of P7,700, the cash prize at stake is P308,000. The event will be hosted by PCO management. Seeing action tonight are well-known cockers and breeders of Metro Manila, such pit managers Cris dela Rosa, Bobby Dizon and Rowdey Vargas. For inquiries, call PCO office: 845-1748; 895-1080 and 818-8108.

Candelaria 7-cocker

WITH 5 K 2000 WORLD Slasher Cup set to stage its finale tomorrow, major sponsor Roundabout Power Feeds prepares for the start of the 2006 Candelaria Derby at the Rizal Coliseum in Candelaria. The 2006 Candelaria 7-Cock Derby is set from Jan. 29 to Feb. 2. A whopping P1 million in total prizes are up for grabs with the derby the biggest at P140,000 and a minimum derby guarantee of P30,000. Hosted by Cabo Tinoso, the event is supported by Roundabout 85 Protein Power Feeds.



Governmen
Cigarette smoking is da

Hewitt, Pierce bow out; Federer glides through

MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA—Third-seed Lleyton Hewitt and women's fifth-seed Mary Pierce were sent spinning out of the Australian Open Thursday, but an awesome Roger Federer glided through to the third round.

Hewitt's dream of glory in front of his home crowd was shattered by Argentina's Juan Ignacio Chela, who outclassed the Australian, 6-4, 6-4, 6-7 (6/ 8?), 6-2.

The former Wimbledon and US Open champion, who was struggling with a left ankle injury, became the highest-seeded casualty of the first round Slam of the season.

That honor had been Pierce's by several hours after she failed to find the sterling comeback from clay-court last to two-time Slam finalist last year, falling 6-3, 7-5 to Petra Mandula of the Czech Republic.

She was the second big name flop on the women's side after Venus Williams.

A third top player could soon be joining them with Alex Corretja continuing to struggle with a hip injury which she said threatened her campaign, which is good news for Martina Hingis whose remarkable comeback crashed to a halt.

The triple champion defeated Nuria Llagostera Vives, 6-1, 6-1, and with Pierce out the draw has opened up for her.

It was an equally awesome start by the "Red Fly," who rolled over Florian Mayer of Germany 6-1, 6-4, 6-0, in just 72 minutes as he comes closer to his debut for years with Grand Slam title viewed up.

Hewitt's former girlfriend Chjuara, seeded two, has been installed as tournament favorite by the bookies but a pinning one game at a time as the struggles to hone the hip injury that she developed in Sydney last week.

The 33 Open champion beat China's Ning Yuan, 6-4, 6-2, but needed medical attention on her right hip in the second set, was making her participation a day-to-day proposition.

AFP

GUILLERMO Coria eyes the ball intently

Lightnings strike twice in NCRAA

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Express seek new heights vs TNT today

GAME TODAY | Araneta Coliseum
7 p.m. —
Game 1 —
Game 2 —
Game 3 —

ABIZ, JUGUETO FORA/BASILIO/AVEN
semifinal mini-wines it into volleyball
Talk 'N Text in the San Mig Coffee PBA Fi-
cers Conference quarterfinals tonight at
the Ceneta Astrodome.

Inspired by a thunderous first quarterfi-
nal appearance, the Express can wrap up
the best-of-five series after grabbing a 2-1
edge with a resurfacing 98-91 victory in
Game 3 Wednesday.

"We need to claim the series in Game
4," said Abiz'l coach Bo Perasol. "Other-
wise, the momentum will swing to Talk 'N
Text."

If necessary, the deciding Game 5
would be scheduled tomorrow with the
winner facing early semifinalist Purefoods
Chunkee on Sunday. In either case, the
Express or the Phone Pals would face play-
ing three games in a row.

Still in search of relief over PBA disap-
pointship, the Express finished third in the
2005 Invitational, their highest achieve-
ment so far.

In a regular conference, however, Abiz'l's
best finish was ninth in the 2004 Governors
Cup. It joined the league in 2003.

After securing an automatic seat in the
semifinals, the Chooker Cagers can in the
final stretch of a three-week respite.

"Again, it will be a battle of adjust-
ments," said Perasol. "We should always
be prepared to match anything that Talk
'N Text would throw at us." John Manuel

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Harbour in semis; Jewels gain playoff

By Jarmine N. Paya

TURNING IN ITS BIGGEST IN THE CLOSING minutes, Harbour Centre spelled a Hapee-PCU counter attack to escape with a 72-68 victory and a semifinal slot in the PBL Stores Cup yesterday at the San Andres Gym.

The Harbour Center cause stunned one among with Jewels's ouce pacing the Portmasters with 15 points. But it was Jocular Pinzares who tallied a key three pointer with 1:14 remaining that took the light out of Hapee-PCU, 69-61, after the Portmasters had dared the defensive five 68-61.

"Pinzares had only a few points but he made the biggest shot," said coach Jorge Juliano after the Portmasters rolled to their sixth straight win, the longest winning streak this conference.

Juliano (Mendez) put pat maintained but he played well, Sam Clegginbill's injura a reliever but he always play 100 percent like Mario Avellano."

The Portmasters Jewels outlet Hapee in knocking spark with Cimmy Gonzo for the last semifinal slot after posting up the Tigers into the fortifies.

Al Magayo and Al Segura fueled the Jewels' offense in the final seconds to tie a 76-66 lead.

"My two Als, they made the big difference in this game," said Jewels coach Robert Sison.

Both Al Bayo and Magayo led Cavum already dalmed the first two semifinal slots after posting the best records in the elimination round.

The scores:
Final Game
Harbour Centre (Al - Magayo 18, Magayo 15, Cruz Gonzo 11, Jarillo 7): Kevin 8, Cristobal 5, Mercado 7, Bagasol 6, Gilbert 5, Alcantara 4, Gonzo 11, Jarillo 11, Bonoto 6, Hapee-PCU (Pinzares

THE LETTERMEN
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Editor Bonnie G. Velarde

Seating the stars

Finding out the hard but exciting way

ONLY IN HOLLYWOOD

Andrew E. Sofelkanz

LOS ANGELES—When I was asked last November if I could work in the Globes, and I said yes, I didn't have the slightest idea that the experience would be a very exciting one.

Since I was a first-time working member of the press group that hands out those awards, I was more than glad to help. Then I learned that I was to be rammed in assigning seats to the stars, and other guests. Easy? Not quite—especially when you are dealing with publicists, agents and managers.

A token to the Globes is one of the hottest in Hollywood. As late as Sunday (the show took place last Monday), folks were trying all sorts of tricks to get a ticket. I got a call from a man asking how he could pick up the ticket for Paul McCartney. I chuckled and whispered the request to my trainer, a veteran member. Without skipping a beat, she said, "Tell him the ticket was picked up yesterday."

When I put the phone down, we all had a good laugh.

Right after the dawn watch—ummmmmm, early last month at the Beverly Hilton, a line of us, accompanied by a top exec from the hotel, marched into the International Ballroom, where the show is held annually, to make preliminary ar-

MORE PHOTOS A2-3

Winning by pushing boundaries

NEW YORK—ARE THIS YEAR'S GOLDEN Globes A-rewarded?

Some people, like Jim Sebastian, president of the pro-rights group Human Rights Campaign, think so, since six awards went to movies with gay or transsexual-related characters.

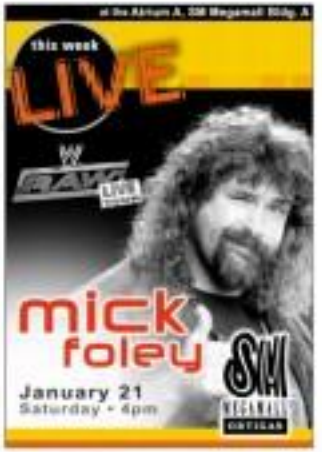
"It was a historic night," he told The Associated Press on Tuesday. "It says a lot about where society is at right now. The more people who openly and honestly, the easier we are simply part of the everyday fabric of American lives."

But Janice Shaw Crouse of Concerned Women for America, a women's group that applies Biblical principles to public policy, maintained, "Once again, the media elites are proving that their pet projects are more important than anything else."

Crouse said some 1.67 million viewers saw appalling heads and throughout the literally fifth Hollywood Monday when Felicity Huffman accepted her Best Drama Actress award for her performance as a group transsexual by saying: "I ... tibble the men and women who listen to stories, determine and a life lived under outrageous because who they really are."

In addition to Huffman's win, the weekday ceremony "Brokeback Mountain" won four Globes, including Best Dramatic picture. Philip Seymour Hoff-

FEATURES A2-3



Red, white, black

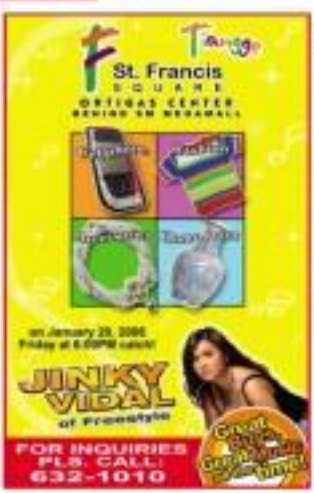
"GODDESSES" FILLED the Golden Globes red carpet, with stars like Felicity Huffman, Marcia Wells, Hilary Swank and Marcia Gray wowing plunging V-neck ladies gowns with dropping, fitted waists and billowing skirts.

Huffman and Wells wore rehearsed white, harnessed in for a top spring fashion trend. Wells complemented her beaded, like Sarah gown with white gardenia-in-her hair.

Reese Witherspoon also wore a strapless white dress by Valentino, with a rope-style belt. Jennifer Hudson wore a white gown with a scarf-style back.

"White was the big winners," Diane Sawyer

RED-HOT



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Legazpi
Naga
Lucena

One in a kind and other boob-tube booboos

HOW DO ALL THE STRUCTURES, WHY DID you decide to cast Dante of stars in your production?

Guest: It's easy to see why he just looking to her...she's only one in a kind!

(What do you mean?)

* * *

Host: What did you finish in college?

Guest: No college, no need for me, just pina-drop all aka.

(Ano daw?)

* * *

Host: How will you promote your new album in a different way?

Guest: Ok, a different way is, we will have a launching show!

(Mr.Super-it's held at noon!)

* * *

Host: How old were you when you first started acting on TV? Did you start as a child artist?

Guest: I was already going up 13.

(Ah, so...)

* * *

Host: People say you're shy, so you won't make it in show business?

Guest: No, I like performing. My problem is, hindi ako sanay sa public people!

(Ay, as public people!)

* * *

Host: What is your advice for people who have grudges against others?

Guest: You have to stop. It's like poison! You must promise to learn to forgive and forget other people!

(Huwag naman...forgive, but don't forget daw!)

* * *

Host: How do you help your happiness?

Guest: I help all my audience with relaxation.

(...What a strange pair you make.)

* * *

Host: Of all the things you have and are, what's the most important to you?

Guest: What's important in my composition are...ge.

(Ok, that!)

* * *

Host: What do you think of (name of starlet)

Guest: She's beautiful, I like her—kaya lang, parang medyo skinny. I appreciate!

* * *

Host: What does it take for a young woman to be accepted in a candidate in this beauty pageant?

Guest: She has to be smart, beautiful—and look good in bathing shoes!

(What is the world are bathing shoes?)

* * *

Host: So, are you going to get married this year?

Guest: I already answered that, as I said Aurora, a while ago.

(...duh!)

* * *

Host: Some say that you are the successor of (name of veteran star). How do you feel when people tell you that?

Guest: Oh, I'm honored to be mentioned in the same name!

(Wooooaaaa, the same breath!)

Fantasy films rule

THE PHILIPPINES isn't the only country where fantasy movies rule. In the United States, two of the biggest hits are "King Kong" and "The Chronicles of Narnia," which both scores the magical and complex a lot of special effects.

Still, but on their heels, a veritable score-

Students' choice awards tonight

THE SECOND UST STUDENTS' CHOICE Awards, the awards for excellence and Christian values in television by the University of Santo Tomas, will be held tonight at the UST Medicine Auditorium.

Rector Magnificus Rev. Timothano Lana, O.P. and Vice-Rector for Academic Affairs Fr. Rolando V. del Carmen, O.P. will host the awards night that start at 6.

The year's theme is: "The Tourism: A Critical Appreciation of Television."

The awards, organized by the Office of the Secretary General and student bodies of UST, will cover TV programs aired between May 2004 and September 2005. Criteria include competence, quality of programming, and the promotion of the Thomasian choice of heart with charity.

Voters to the awards are the 30,000-strong student body of the Pontifical University. The board of judges includes Fr. Rolando V. de la Rosa, O.P., former chairman of the Commission on Higher Education; Fr. Isidro Abaño, UST secretary general; Fr. Herminio de Villa, former ambassador to the Holy See; Fr. Bernardo Rodriguez, O.P., regent of the UST College of Education; Cristina Montiano Bolos, entertainment editor of the Manila Bulletin; Berg Ocampo, president of Campaigns and Grey advertising and columnist of the Philippine Star; and Lito Zulueta, arts and culture editor of the Philippine Daily Inquirer and chair of the Thomasian-ng Alkitang Filipino.

Nominees

The nominees are: "24 Oras," "Insider," "TV Patrol World" (news program); Arnold Clavio, Mike Enriquez, Ted Failon (radio broadcast news and public affairs host); Karen Davila, Korina Sanchez, Mel Tiangco (female broadcast news and public affairs host); "Imbestigador," "Magandang Gabi, Bayan," "The Correspondents" (documentary

FOR MORE ENTERTAINMENT NEWS, SEE PAGE A3

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MOVIES / SCHEDULES / PRICES SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE

Red, white, black

From page A2-1

Schwartz of Glamour magazine said from the red carpet.

Kate Beckinsale's white dress from the Oleg Cassini was dainty and elegant. Renée Zellweger's sheer vintage Chanel haute couture with a champagne color. Great dress was cutting, providing a stunning contrast to her red hair.

And also showed a strong presence: Scarlett Johansson wore a red scoop neck Valentino with soft ruffles on the straps and down

FELICITY Huffman

GIANDRA On

the back; Gwenn Crest wore a strapless Giorgio with a pearled bustier top; Laura Linney had an asymmetrical version.

Eva Longoria complemented her red Givenchy wrap by Bob Mackie with gold platform shoes.

Equally bright was Zhi Zhang's tiered lime green silk tulle gown with a sweetheart neckline and floor-sweeping train.

But some of fashion's favorite faces stuck with classic black.

RENÉE Zellweger in Carolina Herrera; Gwenn Gwen (inset) in Escada

EVA Longoria

MARIA Bello

SARAH Jessica Parker

Sarah Jessica Parker was in a strapless dress with tiny roses of tulle by Badgley Mischka. Zhivi's John Galliano designed a custom cocktail dress for Charlize Theron that featured black lace over nude tulle. Sweetie's black dress by Jean Ya had a sexy back with several straps, and Mary-Louise Parker's had eyebrowing if frown.

Natalie Portman looked Audrey Hepburnesque in a vintage Chanel black lace bustier dress. Renee Zellweger remained loyal to designer Carolina Herrera, wearing an asymmetrical black silk chiffon dress with a leg-length slit up the left thigh.

Teri Hatcher wore a body-hugging Vionnet bronze halter gown with art deco-style beading.

Gwyneth Paltrow's overall look was very soft, her white Balenciaga tiered gown enhanced her pregnancy belly instead of hiding it and her hair was up with soft waves.

"The Shalwars are the fashion icon for the rest of the season," designer Randolph Duke told the Associated Press. "It's a very chic shape."

AP

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JANUARY 13 to FEBRUARY 3
Chinese Food Coins Festival
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JANUARY 21, SATURDAY
An Acrobatic Presentation by Golden Red Lion & Dragon
2pm, Grand Atrium, Level 3

Chinese Folk & Fairytales Storytelling
2pm, Art Plaza, Level 4

Chinese Dance Presentation by Chung Kui Shek College
2pm, Grand Atrium, Level 3

JANUARY 21 to JANUARY 22
Feng Shui Reading with Prof. Charlie Chua
2-6pm, in front of Figaro, Level 3
Present an announcement or simple request (eight days and three months $1,200 on January 21 & 22 to avoid all Feng Shui Reading

JANUARY 22, SUNDAY
Dragon & Lion Dance and Martial Arts Exhibition by Philippine Ling Nam Athletic Federation
1-4pm, Grand Atrium, Level 3

Chinese Calligraphy Demo by Mr. Jason Qua
1-4pm, Level 1, Shaw Blvd. Exhibit area

For details, please call the Marketing Office at 633-7631 to 70

JANUARY 27, FRIDAY
Chinese Retrospective Film Special
Pantaleon Pamintuan, Shang Complex, Level 4
Special rate - P88 per ticket (without food & drinks)

JANUARY 28, SATURDAY
Chinese Calligraphy Demo by Mr. Jason Qua
2pm, Art Plaza, Level 4

Chung Kui Shek Chorale
3pm, Grand Atrium, Level 3

Dynamic Youth Chorale
7pm, Grand Atrium, Level 3

Fireworks Display
12mn, Streetscape

JANUARY 29, SUNDAY
Dragon & Lion Dance Exhibition by Golden Lion Youth Club
2pm, Grand Atrium, Level 3

Chinese Craft Making for Kids
4pm, Art Plaza, Level 4

STREETSCAPE Shows - 9.30pm
Jan. 20 - Liquified Orange
Jan. 21 - Classified
Jan. 27 - Sould Out
Jan. 28 - Rockin Revival

Shangri-La Plaza

狗 狗

3 foreign acts for Pinoy fans tonight

THREE FOREIGN ACTS ON-stream lead fans tonight—Sudanese Boys, Jason Mraz, and Color Jaguars with Pat Ogilvie.

Mraz has a sold-out night engagement—tonight at the Rockwell Tent and tomorrow night at the MRC Tent. No tickets, call 813-5555.

Laguna, Cascades lead singer and songwriter, shares the stage with Epicenter of Spiral Staircase, who stars in "Moon Shadow Thaw Tower" tonight, tomorrow night and Sat. 22 at the Whitehouse Road in Cubao. Tickets available at Tickemaster, Tower Records, Robinsons and Ayala Malls Box Office.

Indonesian duos perform at the Araneta Coliseum, Call 911-5555.

Tonight

Pilita Corrales, the UP Singing Ambassadors, Boy Cassara and Nonie Daniel Dog, soprano Nanette Abuzaakon Manger and Aileen

Cairo pay tribute to "The Music of Dick Zanuck... Love Songs" at Pico Park; 8:30 p.m.

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AYALA CINEMAS

Seating the stars

Front page A1 ›

engagements. I was asked to walk around to find the place."

After the holidays, we went to work, assigning tables and seats to more than 1,000 guests. Nominees from the film categories, A-list presenters and guests got spots in what is called the pit—the section closest to the stage.

The other film nominees and TV nominees were assigned to the next tier. The third tier was designated to the rest of the guests.

Simple? Not so. Over the next couple of weeks, until a day before the event, stars and studios and their accomplices were calling, dropping by, begging, or sending requests for seat-fixes. It became, let's say, "intense."

Re-seatings—or last handlers—kept changing the group and table that the wanted to join (the show is aired in more than 120 countries). Some other seatings wouldn't supply the name of her date or guest until the last minute. Was she desperately looking for one?

Several actors, through their publicists, wanted to know who were in the "cluster" near whomever—no, Glengarry, please!

This colleagues of mine is fine, which is what is needed in her position because there's incredible pressure from all directions. She virtually knows who sees sitting where in the ruse-ballroom!

She stood her ground when a celebrity found out that his kin (the ones are powerful in the biz) was going to be seated on a lesser level. He demanded that he be moved to the first row, too, but his request was turned down.

An actor's manager kept calling almost every day, dying to be invited. As we say, dying very cheap, very cheap. A day before the show, the actor's rep called again and fortunately the first time, a couple of seats became available. He willingly paid $1,200 for the box was ticket (prime ones are sold at $600/each).

Meeting Pamela

Oh yes, the seamstress do pay $600 each. But it's usually the cheapest TV companies who cough up the dough for the privilege to be at Hollywood's party of the year. Only a few get comp tickets—the presenters do, for example (and get the extra special goodie bags which are estimated to be worth at least $12,000 each this year).

So when a star was making pickup about sitting at the table of the studio that was going to fly her in and pay for her ticket, a stooped declared, "No, she will sit at my table!"

A few days before the big day, we received our office in a room right beside the bathroom venue. The entire show was rehearsed again and again with stand-ins for the stars. When a "winner's name" was called, the individual standing in for that certain nominee stood up, walked to the stage and gave an acceptance speech.

A day before the show, the presenters showed up for practice at staggered times (the schedule was amazingly followed to the minute). On their way out, some celebrities dropped by to personally give their scripts. I personally handed Pamela Anderson hers. I'm sure many guys would trade places with me for the pleasure of asking Pamela to sign the receipt. Wearing an embroidered white cotton shirt and a sheer bra underneath, the actress had to bend in the printed and signed her name.

SNN began partially covering the pool in preparation for its party right after the show. A team to evoke such as established the underscore cited foundation for the temporary wooden dance floor. A night prior to the interior direction from one last minute swaggles to switch seats or to plead for a ticket. Lone man came and made a plea in some heard.

Since this was a high profile event, I heard that the FBI wanted a copy of the guest list. But—of course—that the event—over the parking and film passes had chips that identified the bearers of those passes. On the day it self, police dogs came to sniff for bombs.

On finishing my rambling notes on the big day itself—or course that the TV audience couldn't have caught.

(E-mail the columnist at <rinquito_1980@yahoo.com.>)

Winning by pushing boundaries

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Students' choice awards

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WHAT'S INSIDE

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BUSINESS

Editor Raul G. Marcelo
Assistant Editor Cornie S. Narisma

Share prices down 0.77% on rising oil concerns

Nestlé in P2.5-B expansion

Food giant also seen to push local coffee production

By Bernel W. Dominguez

NESTLÉ PHILIPPINES INC. HAS SET ASIDE SOME P2.5 BILLION in capital expenses for the modernization and expansion of its production plants, according to a company executive.

MP, chair Nestle Stockholmer yesterday said the fund would go to the upgrade, capacity expansion, environmental compliance requirements and other needs of the firm's various facilities.

The company has manufacturing plants in Cabuyao, Laguna; Lipa, Batangas; Pulilan, Bulacan; as well as in Cagayan de Oro, Quezon City and Marikina City.

Stockholmer, who is also the company president and chief executive, said MP annually had been laying out at least P2 billion over the past few years.

"We are further improving our Philippine operations to address local demand, even as we continue to serve other markets in the region," he said.

The official made the announcement during the launch of a new coffee product called Nescafé Classic Fast Pick.

Stockholmer added that Nestlé was supporting efforts to encourage local coffee production aimed at reducing consumption of coffee products.

Retail data show that the company each year buys some 840 million to 850 million tons of coffee beans for processing.

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BUSINESS *Friday*

Business Features Editor: Margie Quiogue-Espino

Asean opens portal to tourism deals

DAVAO CITY—BOOKINGS FOR travel in the 10-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) will soon be done in real time online with the development of a Web portal that will serve as a platform to buy and sell the region's existing tourism products and services.

"As soon as the portal goes live in March that year, bookings will be carried out in real time, at the click of the mouse," says Klaus Langefeld, sales manager international of Lufthansa Touristik Systems (LTS), the Germany-based firm that runs information technology that operates online travel bookings.

The German firm signed an agreement to put up and operate **the portal with Asean Tourism** Association (Asean) on Monday at the Marco Polo Davao Hotel, the site of a series of business meetings for the ongoing Asean Tourism Forum (ATF) here.

Tomlin Iskandar, chair of Asean's Intra Asean Travel committee, says the striking up of the Asean portal is a first in the region and will have a great impact **on the industry.**

Instead of searching each hotel website for accommodations, travel agents around the world will only have to log on the Asean **portal to compare rates and find** the hotels, airline companies or tour operators they're looking for, he said.

The visit Asean portal will be known as visit Asean travel to feature all of Asean's member hotels, airlines and tour operators who are directly linked to the site to make it more convenient for travelers around the world to search and book their rates.

"This will be the future mode of travel," says Tarthusen. "Instead of talking through cables and headsets, you only have to open the portal and arrange travel bookings in just 10 minutes, in just a click of the mouse."

The portal will go online in March but will be completed in April this year. It will be powered by e-PATA, a system that provides linkages to several Web travel portals around the world as well as hotel reservation process. Iskandar explains.

ASEAN members' flags were at the Davao International Airport on the 10th leg of Asia's biggest tourism summit.

Iskandar says the industry **generates up to** $3 percent of Asean's $50 million people-to-people tourist market.

The ongoing nine-day Asean Tourism Forum, which currently **pulses over** 2,000 delegates here, is aimed at encouraging Asean travel and package the region as one tourist destination.

Asean countries include Malaysia, Singapore, Philippines, Thailand, Indonesia, Brunei, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam.

Tarthusen says online bookings **will increasingly be how travel** will be done in the future.

"The trend is towards online shopping, where the client logs in, in a portal, find the hotel website, put in the services she needs in her shopping cart, pay with her credit card and then, get her confirmation online.

"It's not like on a road where you have to wait for another day just to purchase. In segmenting this way, your overriding concern is still to check if your market opportunity search is still clutter with user-based versus SIC-based segmentation.

Consider, for example, **inbound** markets. Consumer needs tend to be quite similar between Manila and Cebu. The differences are small, but they take it to different purposes. In market opportunity search for growing one's business in future months because with needs segmentation that is where differences are small, it is where difference is small, it is where opportunities for making a difference in your business is to be found. For example, suppose we find a need segment of consumers who take instant noodle mainly for snack or for "personal pleasure" (Quadrant 1). Discovering the incidence for those consumers to also take the category as a meal would more than double the instant noodle consumption of that segment. Or take the research finding that there's a need segment of instant noodle eaters who see it as "clever" (a stand). That led to the introduction of a "power slurp" (a meal noodle).

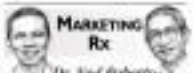
We also must not think that the segmentation methods are always an alternative to user-based. There have been occasions when we've applied usage as a second-level segmentation of a targeted SIC segment. Doing this can take the latter's power as a market opportunity search instrument to a higher level. Such is the case of a wedding gift to real property developments, where land has featured on the Class AB segment to grow its business. In population size, the SEC segment is small. But the real property business is a multibillion-peso industry. Because of the population size of its target market base because of the individual wealth of the segment's members. In fact, each real property project has a small ascertainable "magnitude of its marketing task." For example, even a 50-unit high-end condominium project makes for a billion-peso project.

Within the Class A SEC segment, there were over time, expert home buyers who bought a house for different purposes and needs. One group bought a house for the family. Another group bought a house "all the children are out and married-ours, and this house is too big for the two of us now." The purchase motivator was to fit one's housing unit to one's family life stage. There were two needs segments within the Class A SEC segment. They were also segments that were over time among the Class A SEC families. Each family was a market in at least twice in its lifetime for their home purchase needs.

In approaching market segmentation and segment targeting then, need a fixed template mindset. We realize that such a template has defined your market share and therefore your source of security. But another sense also define the soul of your external future. So replace of a segmentation template, apply a creative market opportunity search and a business growth sourcing premium even to segmentation. More and more successful marketers are into this. That means we're not just talking how of growing your business. It's also about something very basic: your business survival.

Send questions to Ms Roberto-Arguelles@yahoo.com or text us at 0919-516-5411. Get Wise!

Socioeconomic classification and market segmentation



MARKETING Rx

Dr. Ned Roberto & Andy Roberto

Q: WHEN YOU'RE LAUNCHING A new product, and you've conducted a Q&I (Usage, Attitude, Target study) to get the profile of consumers, should your respondent base represent all socio-economic classes (SEC) ? Or should the respondent base reflect the specific market you like to tend especially if you just want to tend your target Class AB and C consumers?

A: Let's start here where we agree. We agree with you that when you're planning a new product launch, you should start with market segmentation and know your target market segment. "Should I go after M.J. socio-economic classes in my 100 stores?" No, you should go after the segmentation that are your target Class AB and C consumers. If you're already at the launching stage, that means you've done your work in reviewing all alternative market segments to target and have zeroed in on a PTM (primary target market) segment. Your research should follow and serve your marketing decisions: In the specific question of the Q&I target respondents, those should be your target consumers whom we have defined as Class AB and C.

That's actually relating our answer to the second part of your question. But we'd like not to challenge the target segment assumption in this second part. The segmentation issue that we've been discussing is when you're launching a new product, is it usually better to segment your market and target according to socio-economic classes? Or does it make for more strategic sense to segment by user segments and then profile those segments by socio-economic classes?"

The astute Mills cor's book, Strategic Market Segmentation, presented a strong case especially in new product launches in favor of segmenting by product use and then profiling the resulting user segments by (among others) SEC.

Based on concrete cases, and following the case in the second part of your question, here's a restatement of the issue.

"Anyone new product launch, do you get your marketing and sales team in a clearer direction of marketing action if you segment your market first, say, the user segment versus the non-user segment, and then find out: How many in the non-user segment? Class AB, C, D and E are in the user segment and how many in the non-user segment? Or are you and your team more ready and confident to do immediate battle if you segment the market into Class AB, C, D and E, and then find out (that is, profile) how many product users and how many non users belong to each socio-economic class?

This is not saying of course that it's wrong to segment by SEC. That's not the issue. The issue is: "Is SEC usually the better means for segmenting your market?" Our research and experiences say that it's not.

Let us refer to a specific case to demonstrate the socioeconomic proposition.

This is the case of the launch of the feminine wash, pH Care. The strategic planning for this product launch started with segmentation research on the feminine wash category. The research found that:

1. **Feminine wash users can assess all** areas are chance with the dominant user belonging to Class AB and upscale C.

2. **The user segment was just around** 20 percent of menstruating women, the remaining 80 percent were non-users.

3. Among the non-users, most used soap or just water for their feminine hygiene needs.

4. Most of soap and water as deodorizing of what feminine wash can do that's distinctively better than soap and water; and

5. Among current feminine wash users, many (a little over 60 percent) were not very satisfied with their current brand because of a urinary tract infection and/or on the advice and prescription of their OB-Gyns.

In the discussion of these findings, it became clear that the market opportunity search was over-weighted in the category user/non-user segmentation than with the SEC segmentation. In particular, here were the more significant of those inferred insights:

1. The larger market opportunity is in penetrating the non-user segment. Successful segment penetration here means literally exploding the feminine wash market.

2. The key to segment penetration of the non-user consumers is to discovering the key drivers to feminine wash use for the user product positioning. And that key driver? A non-user will use if she can be shown that the feminine wash will do the best job at maintaining and preserving her feminine wholeship with her sexual partner.)

3. If the current feminine wash users regard feminine wash (the available ones especially the dominant leader brand, Lactacyd), as an anti-UTI or a medicine, then the user segment will be prohibiting against Lactacyd to become away-from being a medicine. It's essentially a measure to organize the competitive where it is in fact being used or first used by customers, and then to move it to the "daily non-medicine use" by pH Care.

So there's how a user-based segmentation meaningfully enabled an SEC-based segmentation. It enabled in terms of being able to provide richer market opportunity search and insights therefore, it's a case where the total market had more category non-users than users. So what about the case when the category users are population wise the vast majority as it was with the more established categories like headache pills, shampoo, instant noodles, hot-food eating, beauty parlor, and the like?

Here, it still pays to start by trying a second level usage segmentation of the category users. For example, we can segment on participation between the users one, say a heavy user segment, a regular user segment, an occasional user segment, and a lapsed user segment. Then you can still profile each segment by SEC. Compare it with segmenting by SEC and then profiling each SEC segment by its consumers second level user segment.

Duo tapped foreign shores, now goes for local market

FEW WOULD IMMEDIATELY SELL THEIR products to the international market. Most would test the local waters first.

Not so with Sheldon Villanueva and Kristine Dee, graduates of Industrial Design at the Pratt Institute in New York, who decided to hit the international market right away for their home furnishings.

Sheldon and wife of almost two years, Kristine, are up at home furnishings and accessories design and manufacturing company even before getting engaged, shortly after they obtained MS degrees.

Sheldon is a member of the third generation of a family that has been manufacturing and exporting to european buyers from Europe, Asia and the Americas. "My grandparents started it all with their company Philippine Pacific Geodigm, which supplied those large industrial super steel in ships, using abaca from Bicol, where we are from," he recounts.

In 1972, his parents bought Wesparco and, because of the small scale demand at that time, decided to concentrate on the abaca placemats, coasters, baskets, and hampers, under their company, Sheldeed. Being a member of the third generation producible pursued his course Industrial Design as a major in college. It was at the De La Salle University where he met Kristine, also college, both appreciated at their design competitive from Sheldon trained and worked in almost all areas in his parents' Sheldeed Garage Treasures, while Kristine finished and "worked with Boris Bunel (Philippines, a company that supplies home, office and kitchen cabinet systems).

They style their approaches was limited at that time so both decided to take up their Master's Degree in New York.

"After our course in Pratt, we felt we wanted to produce our own products...applying the concepts and principles we learned through our work and in Pratt Institute," Sheldon shares. "We formed Duo Design, and began with lamps as our first products."

They began by joining trade fairs, something Sheldon learned from his work with Sheldeed. Over the past three years, their product line has expanded to include table-

SHELDON Villanueva and Kristine Dee, partners in life and business.

top accessories, furniture, and area rugs. They have been a part of several trade fairs and exhibits, and have exported their products to the US, Europe, Australia and Japan. Although their designs are modern—Sheldon's on the streamlined side and Christine's free-flowing and organic—they use the same materials the Villanueva family has been using for decades: abaca, from the roughest to the finest weave.

They are in many communities with high-tech skills such as Bicol, where their family has been training and working with for decades. Apart from appreciating the workmanship, it is an act I would like to continue supporting these communities by providing them with opportunities to grow."

Their businesses abroad have shown how much the modern Filipinos' products are appreciated globally. Trade shows have rewarded, too, that the local market is ready for these designs. "These types and styles of furniture and accessories are better suited for our climate, and with our modern designs, we can see Filipinos take elements in going back to 'our very own'," Kristine says.

Because of this, they have opened Duo Living, what they would like to call a 'show home'—a shop at home concept. They had renovated a house built in the '70s and used this to showcase their products in a setting that would make it easier for people how these could complement today's home.

The area teamed up with interior designer Andrew Strahn Galvez, whom their clients can consult with for their interior and space requirements.

They serve their Filipino clients, on top of producing for international buyers. This duo's flexibility, who is in charge of production and supervision, be Duo Design and Sheldeed, is fluid for one to two weeks at a time. "It's never a chore. We have found the business that allows us to maximize our creativity and the resources presented by social craftsmanship. It also feels good to be able to help the communities of extremely talented and hardworking Bicolanos, who would otherwise have limited sources of income," they add. (Duo Living is located at 4429 Bridgeport St., Mandaluyong City. Tel. 710-6028.)

A HOUSE built in one '70s is used to showcase the couple's creations.

Council of State, BSP style

COCKTALES

Victor C. Aguilan

RE DAT RAPE SPOT HR FORMATIVE years in the cherry-inducing insurance research department, but Armando Intengan Jr. apparently has nabbed a few important point-ist lessons along the way worthy of his ka-Saint, Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo.

In his first ever Nine Tens cocktail recep-tion Tuesday in Bangko Sentral governor, not only did Intengan tote-he hosts chairperson and presidentess but also church and opposi-tion leaders led by Sen. Edgardo Angara (wearing his female hat) and Shamind In-ternational chair Inez Macaraig Gutierrez-Bonoan. Archbishop Gaudencio Rosales, Aglipay archbishop Crisostomo Ibarola, and MSD types led by former Supreme Commissioner Rene Bañez.

Even acquaintance Gregor Ty dropped by, and, in the surprise of industry watchers, Atanio An-gelo Zobel de Ayala (not only attended but even lingered on, exchanging pleasantries with, hmmm, Equitable PCIBank chair Jeci-mund Mario Redondo).

Brother S. Cattle Boy chains that Ba-mondes wanted to know how the Zobel heir how thinks Coop, many income ago, reduced the number of board seats, thus preventing JM Batoon de Oro Jaipur Bonoy Sy Jr. from joining the Candaba stables.

Seriously speaking now, despite the neces-sarily sensitive liaison between the monetary and fiscal authorities, Finance Secretary Gary Teves seemed to have enjoyed the evening, as well as new Insurance Commissioner Evangeline Eara-silla and new fifth third Jose Bating.

Hint to show you what kind of daily strain a government executive is subjected to, Bating later got invited to frolic for the late-night wake of the mother of Philippine Stock Ex-change-ers. But we are digressing.)

Due to the song, "Kahit Maputi na ang Buhok Ko," which the Intengans believe induc-es executives before they policies entered up a syringe, Escobido declined to get drawn into answering media inquiries from anonymous industry players.

Going back to the Intengan Bangko Sentral ceremonial to have joined up a few executive-ey-ups along the way, setting up chairs for the likes of retired central bankers Jose Cuisia, Gloai Fe Bautis, and a number of seats, to protect from the evening mist—the affair was held at the open-air Sun Sun Asso-ciation—the amused hope of Deputy Gover-nor Armando Ibañez and University of the East president Fred Ruiz Castro, Domingo.

Flanks-To former governors Jose Cuisia Jr. and Jaime Laya, Intengan even affirmed a hand to his immediate predecessor, Gabriel Singson and Rafael Buenaventura, who were both in the United States, one on an unanno-unced holiday, the other on a medical holiday.

After a number of speeches, which hardly anyone listened to, the bankers and the rest of the suits were lolling all over themselves try-ing to invite the girl for a weekend round of golf.

To the techs few who shall manage to get this to the listlessy, here's a tip on how to beat the top central banker in the round sport: Singson, in this time, loses his swing whenever the currency is under attack; Intengan could not suppress a rich whenever pressed about the future/title.

Called to the market

A LITTLE-KNOWN commerce company in Quezon City, Ken's Commerce Center, has stumbled into a quiet money-maker with its purchase of the country's first blank get. See for Why.

Despite the absence of any advertising, guy-haired men who dislike drying their hair have been swapping up the age-defying mask as quickly that the Landmark department store almost always runs out of stock. (Tip: Try 3M Makati at Mayapis-in-Quezon.)

Another maker of a laser edible cream, here, is building a new plant in Pampanga solely to fill ever-increasing export demand from overseas Pinoys for the distinctly Fil-ipino ice cream.

To comply with tough US food and drug rules, these save powdered coconut milk, in-stead of its trademark coconut milk, to them a similar, yet richer tasting ice cream.

According to the grapevine, export sales now amount for more than half of the ice-maker.

Money-go-round

✦ DESPITE being less than a year in finance, Ambassador Manuel Acoseta Teehankee is now asked to come to Muntinlupa and as-sume the presidential legal counsel position vacated by Silvestrian Gutierrez who is now the Ombudsman.

Teehankee is actu-ally assuming, but if he accepts, then former Ambassador to UK and Trade Sec-retary Cesar Buenicio is tipped to succeed him as the Philip-pines' permanent representative to the World Trade Organi-zation.

✦ FORMER CAF corporate secretary Pamela Bengzon heads the short list of nominees to the Securities and Exchange Commission, over the newly retired Josefa Feliciano.

Heard through the grapevine

FERRUCIO Pisanio (Investor) Corp. Promotion and a few foreign partners are setting up a BPO business in the country.

(Email: nicholas_pili@philstar.net or cool-aidy_pili@yahoo.com)

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Investments of Tanalan Life Insurance Portfolio	Latest Price Jan. 17, 2006	Last Price Jan. 16, 2006
Bond Fund - Peso	1.478307	1.471161
Managed Fund - Peso	1.498782	1.498811
Growth Fund - Peso	1.316428	1.316357
Bond Fund - US Dollar	1.0187	1.0181

Investment Funds of [illegible] and [illegible]

	UNIT PRICES (in Php)	
	Jan. 16, 2006	Jan. 9, 2006
Fixed Income Fund	1.113416	1.110858
Balanced Fund	1.104932	1.101162
Equity Fund	1.086331	1.084847

PNB seen posting profit

By Dorii C. Dutiiba

THE PHILIPPINE NATIONAL BANK IS SEEN posting a profit for the fourth straight year.

PNB president Omar Ibbo said yesterday that he expected the bank to outpace its net profit target last year of P400 million by 15 percent despite some stringent accounting rules.

PNB, once the country's biggest bank, was rumbo-sixth with total assets of about P219 billion.

From January to September 2005, PNB posted a net income of P454 million, overtak-ing its 9515 million full-year income for 2004.

During the same period, the bank's non-performing loan ratio went down to 29.2 per-cent from 35 percent at the end of 2004.

The bank is majority owned by tobacco and beer magnate Lucio Tan.

intel Xeon inside

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NATIONAL FOOD AUTHORITY
Quezon City

ANNOUNCEMENT OF BIDDING

In accordance with Republic Act 9184, the National Food Authority (NFA) wishes to announce that it will be conducting an Invitation to Bid (IB) on February 15, 2006 at 10:00 AM at the NFA FOOD DEVELOPMENT CENTER Bldg., FTI Complex, Taguig, Metro Manila, among interested and eligible Philippine Corporations to participate in the bidding for the supply and delivery of the following:

	COMMODITY/IES	QUANTITY (MT)	ARRIVAL PERIOD
1	Imported Well Milled Rice (Indica) (Fragrant) (Long Grain) (White Rice) (No Preservatives)	411,000 MTs	Within 60 days after receipt of Letter of Credit (L/C)
2	Imported Well Milled Rice (Indica) (Fragrant) (Long Grain) (White Rice) (No Preservatives)	10,000	Within 60 days after receipt of Letter of Credit (L/C)
3	Imported Well Milled Rice (Indica) (Fragrant) (Long Grain) (White Rice) (No Preservatives)	10,000	Within 60 days after receipt of Letter of Credit (L/C)

Prospective shipping companies shall be registered under Philippine laws and compliance to Maritime Industry Authority (MARINA).

Foreign shipping companies must be represented by a local shipping operator/ owner registered under Philippine Laws and accredited by Maritime Industry Authority (MARINA).

Minimum shall not be less than 10,000 MT.

All interested shipping companies must submit the following documentary requirements: Duly accomplished Bid Form; Valid and current Mayor's/Business Permit; Valid and current Philippine Contractor's License; All interested offerors are required to submit a bid bond equivalent to 2.5% of the Total Contract Price in the form of Cashier's and/or Manager's Check issued by a reputable commercial bank; Bid Bonds in an irrevocable Bond by LC issued by a reputable commercial bank.

All duly accepted bids are required to submit a performance bond equivalent to 5% of the Total Contract Price in the form of Cashier's and/or Manager's Check issued by a reputable bank or Surety Bonds.

List of Eligible Bidders and Invitation to Bidders may be requested by: MR. ORLANDO C. MANALO, Assistant Department Manager and NFA ACTING SECRETARIAT, Invitation Manager, Department for Marketing Operations, 5th Flr., NFA Warehouse Bldg., 101 E. Rodriguez Sr. Ave., Quezon City, Telephone Nos. 723-7104, 151-00-84 or 713-0047 Loc. 3012 during January 13, 2006.

The Terms of Reference (TOR) can be obtained from the Invitation and Offer Sheets will appear as roadshow starting January 13 up to January 31, 2006 10:00 AM - 3:00 PM (upon payment of a Php 1,200.00 non-refundable fee.

The Pre-Bid Conference Meeting conference will be held on **January 31, 2006, at 2:00 PM** at the FOOD DEVELOPMENT CENTER, FTI Complex, Taguig, Metro Manila.

Submission of eligibility requirements, technical proposal and price offers will be submitted on or before 10:00 AM at the FOOD DEVELOPMENT CENTER, FTI Complex, Taguig, Metro Manila on **February 14, 2006. Opening of bids** will start at exactly **10:00 AM.**

The National Food Authority reserves the right to reject any or all bids/proposals, to waive any irregular informality or defect therein and may accept the bid which is deemed most advantageous to the Agency.

(Sgd.) JESSUP P. NAVARRO
Deputy Administrator
and Chairman, BAC

SMC set to issue $500M in bonds

By Doris C. Dumlao

FOOD AND BEVERAGE GIANT San Miguel Corp. plans to offer as much as $500 million in global bonds over the next few days, making advantage of the favorable climate for Philippine debt issuers.

Banking sources said SMC had solicited proposals from investment banks on the planned offering, with Barclays Capital, JS Financial, HSBC and Deutsche Bank expected to lead the underwriting deal.

The blue chip company is expected to use the proceeds from the bond offering to refinance existing debts and bankroll expansion projects, sources said.

"The issuance is slated as soon as possible," one banking source said.

SMC adds to list a major expansion plans and has committed spending for operations abroad.

One foreign investment banker said it was a very good time for the private sector to tap the offshore market.

The strong investor appetite for the Philippine government's $2.2 billion offering last week had likewise proved top demand for sub-investment grade corporate paper.

Investors swamped the Republic of the Philippines' offer of $1.2 billion in 10-dollar denominated bonds and 500 million in euro-denominated bonds with $3.5 billion in tenders.

It was the first time a non-investment bond was out of Asia this year.

"The stars are aligned," the banker said. "There's progress on the (domestic) front front and both local and international (political) factors are aligning."

The banker noted that JS Security Holdings' recent global offering was raised to $200 million after drawing some $1.1 billion in demand.

The seven-year bonds carried an interest of 8.25 percent.

Republic of the Philippines
COMMISSION ON AUDIT
Commonwealth Avenue, Quezon City, Philippines

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The Commission on Audit through its Bids and Awards Committee (BAC), invites contractors registered with and accredited by the Philippine Contractors Accreditation Board (PCAB) to apply for eligibility and a Request to Bid for the following (lots):

Name of Contract	Construction of Three (3) Storey COA Complex
Location	COA Compound, Commonwealth Ave., Q.C.
Approved Budget for the Contract(ABC)	P 55,000,000.00
Contract Duration	270 Calendar days

Prospective bidders should possess a valid PCAB License Category Large "A" application in the contract name completed in entirety supported with the net worth of at least 50% of the ABC, performance ratio, financial and management ratios to be eligibility forms available for the prospective of the contract. The BAC will use non-discretionary pass/fail criteria in the Eligibility Check Screening as set out in the Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR). The BAC will conduct post-qualification of the lowest calculated bid.

All contractors' relative to Organizing Government and Executive, the Executive, Parliamentary Commission, Judicial Department, Constitutional Bodies, Republic Agencies and Board of Directors and be governed by the common provisions of R.A. 9184 and its Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR).

The schedule of BAC activities is as follows:

Schedule	BAC Activities
January 20, 2006	- Release of Letter of Intent and issuance of Eligibility Forms
February 7, 2006	- Eligibility Screening at 10:00 AM
February 14, 2006	- Issuance of Bid Documents
February 16, 2006	- Pre-Bid Conference at 10:00 AM
February 28, 2006	- Receipt and Opening of Bids at 10:00 AM

Prospective bidders shall submit the Eligibility Requirements to the BAC Office, Room 102, Ground Floor, Premier 2000 Bldg., COA Complex, Commonwealth Avenue, Quezon City. Major Key Bids values the awards on the Eligibility Check by the BAC of the same address.

The BAC will issue Bidding Documents only to Bidders declared by the BAC to be eligible for the bidding and payment of a non-refundable amount of Twenty Thousand Pesos (P20,000) to the Cashier's Office.

The Commission on Audit reserves its respective's whatsoever circumstances or indemnify bidders on any requirement except in the preparation of their bids.

(Sgd.) Atty. ARCADIO B. CUENCO, JR.
Chairman
Bids and Awards and Committee

WESM to start operations

By Clarissa S. Batino

THE COUNTRY'S WHOLESALE ELECTRICITY spot market or WESM is now set to start commercial operations.

WESM, which is expected to help reduce the cost of power in the country, will start with a volume of 10,000 megawatts of supply and 9,000 megawatts of demand, according to the Philippine Electricity Market Corp., the company that will operate the WESM.

As there are more sellers than buyers at the start of WESM's operations, the price of electricity that will be bought from the spot market would likely be lower than the current rate.

Energy Secretary Raphael Lotilla said the electricity market could start commercial operations this month, as soon as the pricing mechanism to be used was approved by the Energy Regulatory Commission.

"Once WESM is in place, we are on our way to empowering consumers by giving them the chance to choose their electricity supplier," said Lotilla.

PRIVATIZATION AND MANAGEMENT OFFICE

INVITATION TO BID

Being offered through public bidding, as are whole lot and are as is, where is" basis, the machinery, equipment and equipment formerly belonging to Unisol Industries and Manufacturing Corporation (UNISOL), located at Barrio Maliking, Calamba, Laguna, for a total Floor Price of P16,426,870.80.

Interested parties may request for the duly authenticated copies of the bidding documents for a nominal fee of PhP500.00 from the Marketing Department, 5th Floor, PMO Building, FDR Gamboa Street, Legaspi Village, Makati City. The detailed terms and conditions governing the sale of the bid documents shall be on 31 January 2006, 5:00 p.m.

All offers shall be received, opened and tabulated in the presence of other bidders on 1 February 2006, at 2:00 p.m. at the PMO Conference Room, 6th Floor, 104 Gamboa Street, Legaspi Village, Makati City.

For more information, please call Mr. John DP. Balderrama of the PMO Marketing Department at 811-8331 / 817-4702.

QUINTANA MANAGEMENT LLC and SEAWORLD MARINE SERVICES, INC.

A Strong Partnership in Creating Jobs for Filipino Seafarers

At a time when the economic woes of the Philippines seem to be far from over and jobs are scarce, the crews of Quintana Management LLC in the Philippine ship manning market through its hard-working agent, Seaworld Marine Services, Inc. is home to the fortunate few.

QUINTANA was founded in January 2005, by affiliates of Cushman & Wakefield, Jo Tim Reserve Corporation and American Metals and Coal International, registered in the Marshall Islands and operated from Athens, Greece. QUINTANA provides the bulk carrier transportation services world wide. To date, it owns and operates a fleet of 2 CAPESIZE and 10 PANAMAX SELF Self carriers, making Quintana **amongst the largest dry-bulk fleets in the industry** with a total carrying capacity of 974,077 dwt, since its commencement operations in April 2005.

SEAWORLD was founded by Capt. Romuel T. Guzman in April 2005. It acquired its manning license in June 2005. The mission of SEAWORLD is to help in the generation of employment opportunities for Filipino seafarers, thereby uplifting the quality of their life and their families and contributing to the economic growth of the Philippine nation. To date, it has already deployed over 200 seafarers on board 15 ships in a short span of 8 months in a full-time basis. With the plans of its principal, QUINTANA, to double its fleet in 2006, **SEAWORLD can offer more job opportunities to the Filipino seafarers at the most competitive compensation package in the bulk industry.**

QUINTANA and SEAWORLD formally launched their partnership last November 9, 2005 through a Seafarers' Conference held at the Manila Hotel in Intramuros, Manila. The key officials of QUINTANA and SEAWORLD headed by Capt. Romuel T. Guzman as well as the specific programs to address the needs of the principal and seafarers, such as onboard seminar plans, performance feedback facilitation as a basis for competency and career development, effective document management and seven-day out-of-allotment.

The coming out of QUINTANA and SEAWORLD to the manning industry culminated in their first corporate Christmas Party on December 10 at the Pinto Seafood Restaurant in Tin Fort. The affair was made more memorable by the awarding of the ISO9001:2000 Certificate to SEAWORLD by Mr. Ramon Torrevillas, Managing Director of Certification International Philippines (CIP). QUINTANA and SEAWORLD officials and staff, the seafarers and officers' wives/significant others became one with Joy Viado and danced the night away with a live band. It was a truly enchanted night to remember.

Mr. Ramon Torrevillas (left) of CIP presents the ISO9001:2000 Certificate to Capt. Romuel T. Guzman as Mr. Mike Fernandez, Chief Commercial Operations Officer, Capt. Richard Kenworthy, Operations Manager, Mr. George Tarrazona, Quality Manager and Ms. Ana Trinidad, Carering Officer. The theme of the celebration was "Bringing Herself Together". Rear Admiral Fidel Ofiana, President of PMMA graced the event and delivered a speech on "The Role of the PMMA in Developing Quality Seafarers".

Maxine Ofiana", the Carolina de Leon, Chief of the Seaboard Employment Accreditation and Processing Center of PMMA also awarded and talked about the "Role of PMMA in the Ship Manning Industry and Trends in the Philippine Ship Manning Industry".

Quintana & Seaworld Quality Mission Completed

QUINTANA became a publicly listed company on July 14, 2005 at the New York Stock Exchange. The Company's competitive strength will be its quality and young fleet to know no bigger dry-bulk vessels. Increased flexibility through the use of open ships, low cost operation through internal management of its vessels, stable cash flow from reputable charterers and experienced management team are the high regard for excellence in operations, safety and environmental policies and training of qualified seafarers.

SEAWORLD's core company has its drive to contribute is manifested in **passing its ISO9001:2000 certification audit, with zero non-conformity.** SEAWORLD aims to deliver value to its principals and contribute to their success by providing only competent ship officers and crew, effective communication and operation of their vessels. SEAWORLD wants to distinguish itself in the industry as a company that shows my integrity in all its dealings, always by excellence and characterized by respect for the dignity of the Filipino seafarers.

QUINTANA and SEAWORLD are committed in building their respective organizations towards business leadership propelled by competent and committed Filipino seafarers.

PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE

FOREIGN EXCHANGE

Country	Unit	Peso Equivalent	Dollar Equivalent	Peso Equivalent
United States	Dollar	0.018182	1.000000	55.0000
Japan	Yen	0.007364	0.404870	22.2680
United Kingdom	Pound	1.031021	1.752850	96.4068
Hongkong	Dollar	0.140625	0.128196	7.0508
Switzerland	Franc	0.014198	0.778816	42.8349
Canada	Dollar	0.015516	0.853010	46.9155
Singapore	Dollar	0.012121	0.666333	36.6483
Australia	Dollar	0.014211	0.781155	42.9635
Netherlands	Euro	0.015411	1.148151	63.1483
Bahrain	Dinar	1.136364	2.462500	135.4375
Kuwait Dinar	Dinar	1.136364	2.462500	135.4375
Saudi Arabia	Riyal	0.018182	0.393750	21.6563
Brunei	Dollar	0.010638	0.571918	31.4555
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.000005	0.000275	0.0151
Thailand	Baht	0.000455	0.024574	1.3516
UAE	Dirham	0.004951	0.267354	14.7045
Qatar	Riyal	0.004951	0.267354	14.7045
Brazil	Real	0.008439	0.455722	25.0647
Denmark	Krone	0.002457	0.132677	7.2972
India	Rupee	0.000407	0.021972	1.2085
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.004831	0.260972	14.3535
Mexico	Peso	0.001653	0.089272	4.9100
New Zealand	Dollar	0.013158	0.710526	39.0789
South Africa	Rand	0.002631	0.142046	7.8126
Korea	Won	0.000019	0.001026	0.0564
Taiwan	New Dollar	0.000570	0.030781	1.6930

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Nestlé . . .

Focus page B2

Domestic sales from the bulk of Nestlé's local coffee business, which has been growing between 4 percent and 5 percent yearly.

MPI is pushing local farmers to grow coffee in accordance with its prevailing farm industry manual on organic farming techniques, as well as access to coffee seedlings from the Textile Development Team in Tagum, Davao del Norte, Nestlé officers said.

An added coffee cultivation should be encouraged, considering the local climate was identified as this.

The country has the potential to overtake Vietnam's lead in coffee development in the region, and revitalization can of the major exports in the world, he said.

Nestlé product lines include milk, infant nutrition, infant food, beverages, non-dairy creamers, food, ice cream and chilled dairy, breakfast cereals, confectionery and pet care.

The firm also owns established brands such as Nescafe, Bear Brand, Nestlé and Alpo.

Share . . .

Foreground B1

and 21.25.46. Volume was 1.977 billion shares worth P711.5 million ($14.22 million).

The broader all-share index fell 2.91 points to 1,995.30, Losers beat gainers 47 to 27, with 37 stocks unchanged. The peso was at 52.103 to the dollar as of mid-day.

Equitable PCI Bank led the decline, ending down P2.50 at P62. Top traded shares in dollar terms were Philippine Long Distance Telephone at P2,675.51, ABS-CBN Holdings Corp. at P5.30, while Ayala Land Inc. at P25.

San Miguel A shares were down 50 centavos at P63.50, while San Miguel B shares ended unchanged at P47.50.

AFP

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BUSINESS

Palace cuts tariffs on petrochem to 5%

Move seen to soften impact of VAT hike on downstream players

By Reena V. Domingo

MALACAÑANG ISSUED LAST WEEK AN executive order that lowered the tariffs on petrochemical imports from Southeast Asian countries to 5 percent.

EO No. 486, dated Jan. 12, reduced the duties on 41 tariff lines, including raw materials for plastic products and finished goods, from the present range of 7 percent to 10 percent.

The products covered included polymers of ethylene, propylene or of other olefins, styrene and vinyl chloride or of other halogenated olefins.

Coverings of plastics for floors, walls and ceilings; plates, sheets, film, foil and strips of plastics, and plastic belts, ceilings, ropes and cables are also covered.

The order superseded EO 304 which suspended the imposition of a 3 percent duty on these products, which should have been done starting 2002 under the common effective preferential tariff regime of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations free trade agreement.

EO 486, however, provides that tariffs would revert to the EO 304 levels once a local naphtha cracker plant starts commercial operation as determined by the Cabinet-level Committee on Tariffs and Related Matters.

President Macapagal-Arroyo said the government "recognizes the need to provide an enabling environment" for the naphtha cracker to attain international competitiveness.

The lowering of tariffs had been the subject of a squabble between downstream players who said high duties caused price distortions and refurbishment players who supported the naphtha-cracker project.

Philippine Plastics Industry Association welcomed EO 486, saying it would soften the impact of the 2 percentage point increase to 12 percent of the value-added tax starting February and the increase to 35 percent of the corporate income tax.

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Kung Hei Fat Choi from Nokia! As a special gift on this occasion, we are giving you a free basket of Mandarin Oranges for every purchase of a Nokia phone*!

*Nokia 1100 and 1110 are not included in this promo.
*Available at selected Nokia stores in Metro Manila.

Insurance Commission raising fees

THE INSURANCE COMMISSION IS SET to increase by more than 100 percent the fees and charges it slaps on insurance companies, saying the move is necessary to complement efforts to enhance the delivery of its services.

Insurance Commissioner Evangelina Escubillo said the increase would be implemented in February or March. The specific amounts are still under study by the National Tax Research Center.

"The increase will be huge because the rates have been the same for about three decades now," Escubillo told reporters in an interview.

Escubillo said the Insurance Commission intended to align its rates with those imposed by counterpart regulatory bodies, such as the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas and the Securities and Exchange Commission.

Escubillo said the increase in fees and charges was needed to cover the increasing expenses, which were primarily shouldered by the national government.

Currently, fees on the renewal of an insurance company's registration from only P100 to P1,200. Examination fees for insurance agents are set at only between P150 and P500.

Escubillo said the Insurance Commission intended to improve its computer system so better monitor the financial condition of insurance firms. Computerization efforts would also aid in the Insurance Commission's plan to move toward a risk-based approach in supervising insurance firms. Michelle U. Ayroso

NTC asked to step into PT&T-Smart row

PHILIPPINE TELEGRAPH & TELEPHONE Corp. of the Ayalas family is contesting the computation of the interconnection fees charged on it by Smart Communications Inc. since 1998.

PT&T accused Smart of overcharging and was seeking a refund. It had asked the National Telecommunications Commission to intercede on its behalf.

Smart, however, said it had been billing PT&T based on their compromise agreement signed earlier.

PT&T originally owed Smart P72.38 million in access charges, or fees on PT&T calls to Smart, from October 1998 to December 1998. However, PT&T claimed it owed Smart only P48.34 million for the period.

"In 1999, due to the financial condition of PT&T, Smart accepted PT&T's plea to use its control on the connection (but PT&T would) settle the amount until May 2001 based on its committed payment schedule," said Smart in its letter to PT&T.

PT&T was supposed to pay Smart P1 million a month from September 1999 to June 2000; P2 million a month from July to September 2000; P2.5 million a month from October to December 2000; and P5 million a month from January to May 2001 for a total of P98.5 million. But PT&T was able to pay only P3.8 million from October 1999 to March 2001.

"With this, Smart would have reverted to its initial figure as per the agreement, yet it gave PT&T another chance to settle its outstanding account through an offsetting arrangement involving Smart/Pilot and PT&T-Capwire, which reduced its outstanding account to P13.11 million," said Smart. Gerard S. Bartiso

JGSH debt offer raised to $300M

JGSH PHILIPPINES LTD., AN OFFSHORE subsidiary of tycoon John Gokongwei Jr., is increasing its seven-year debt offer to $300 million due to strong investor interest, parent firm JG Summit Holdings Inc. told the Philippine Stock Exchange (PSE) yesterday.

JG Summit has agreed to set an 8.5 percent coupon for the fixed rate notes due 2013.

The notes will have an interest rate of 8 percent and will carry a put option on the fifth year, allowing bondholders to sell back the bonds to JGSH at par at the end of five years.

JGSH Philippines originally planned to $200 million of the debt paper.

Credit Suisse First Boston (Europe) Limited was engaged as the lead manager for the offering. Proceeds from the notes issue will be used to repay $100 million in debts of the JG Summit Group due next month. A portion of the proceeds will be spent for "general corporate purposes." Khaleen D.L. Sarabia

LIFESTYLE

Echo Chelo Band-Formoso

Lifestyle crowd gets busy this year

MORE FRIENDS AND colleagues define the state of their career and life while charting their direction in the new year.

LIFE-STYLED

Thelma Simeon Sison Jimeno

Ed Quimson, the chef who's changing the cuisine of restaurants from Club Strali, in Palawan, where he prepares incredible gastronomic feasts for weekend and holiday guests, to the renowned Teak Bistro in Backwell [the place to go for your pizza these days in Greenmeadows is stumping]: "I plan to do community work for Nepa Urbanoo and the Bel-Air heritage Guidebook. Also considering for Splendido in Tagaytay or with Bistro Mesa, do a few feasts for Pho at the Fort, do volunteer work for Magsaysay Linos, and finally do groundwork for my cookbook."

Leica Cuspo: "Do more yoga, golf, French. I need to be patient, more and respond (over options), sleep and eat less, travel, read, go to Church and work out more, come up with an amazing Susie salsa recipes, enjoy single life, and love myself one a little more."

Wynn Wynn Ong: "This is the best place of my life so far—my second skin. I'm more sociable with who I am and surprised about who I will evolve into. My design philosophy reflects my belief that change and our ability to learn are constant."

Therese Gerard Santos: "I start by being conscious of my health, eating right and preventive body exercise, giving more time for my personal and spiritual well-being."

Raymund Isaac: "Simplify life, work and home. I love to enjoy my life, look [at it] through a child's eye. Love like the first time and dream thinking all will come true."

Alex Hontanosas: "It's the year of taking things to a different level, pushing my yoga education further at Iyengar school in India, going to serious cooking classes, seeing my first pamangkin get married and start a new generation...[a] blessed home. I'm at the point where I'm ready for what I hoped to and could do. Now we'll see if I can take on what I thought I couldn't while keeping all I have close to me."

Leonor Cruz: "At 56, am gets closer to the finish line. I'm enjoying life every day in the max physically, but I'm also developing my spiritual growth. My major task is to get rid of toxic waste—here to avoid people with venom."

Alex Wolgarn: "I don't usually make plans past the season since people have unvarying ways of killing them.... I will try my best to rein in my cynicism. It has been a struggle and climb to where I am —not that I'm at the top of my game. Gaining some credibility as fashion/lifestyle writer

MIKE de la Rosa

WYNN WYNN Ong

THERESE Gerard Santos

CESAR Cuspo

EGG FUENTES (center) with the Mega cast/ talk marketing team: Aldo Cayabyab, marketing director Nina King, Bubu Ortega, Ric Diaz, Dru Chavez and Rosalie Cua

THE BRILLIANT Fuentes roasts Cheers to 15 years of publicity power

ARANETA Center Inc. VP for marketing Grace Magno

ANGELS D'Vasseur, Justin Dayrit, Liz Gonzales and Rochelle Leyba

15 years of PR success; power photo exhibit

FUENTES PUBLICITY NETWORK, ONE of the country's leading PR agencies, celebrated 15 awesome years in the public relations industry with an intimate gathering that drew top clients and media VIPs—all two-visible, pahanggan.

The action took place at the trendy Mezzo in Greenhills 2. The anniversary bash had a very exclusive guest list, which hinged at the fantastic agency's creative chemistry that includes some of the world's most recognized brands and multibillion-dollar companies...from banking to retail, fashion and beauty, business and health, entertainment and electronics.

We were welcomed by no less than the company president and founder, everyone's pal, Ichi Fuentes, who established the company at first in the basement of his house in Makati.

What started as a one-man operation is now a super major industry player, providing 360 services to big clients and local companies in the country, specializing not just in corporate PR and marketing communications, but also in events management, launches, fine arts, advertising and graphic design services.

According to Ichi, "Most of our clients have been working with us for years, some even going as far back as 1990, which is our founding year."

Cool singer Shamine Michaels entertained us with a cool jazz number, pahanggan.

Anniversaries, what's a party without prizes and goodies raffled off? In guests? Given away were Puma T-shirt and Toni Bell gift certificates, Cotteah shopping vouchers, Rivera and Isaiahen beauty packs, and a hot Philips mobile phone.

Sey Ichi, here's a toast to 15 years of publicity power! Cheers, pahanggan!

Hot photo exhibit

The stay's social set flocked to the chic Red Room to see Mideel Bhargo-Ca, mind, whose Nokia and Metro Scenes unveiled the "Scenes on Scenery" photo exhibit.

The exhibit featured photographs of Manila's scenes and shadows taken by some of the country's popular photographers, pahanggan.

The photographic subjects were Ambet Hizon, Richie Santos, Thop-Ting Cojuangco, Bianca Araneta, Bella Lo-Sol, Claudia Bermudez, Joel Ramos, Steve Marcos, Georgina Wilson and me.

The featured photographers were Angie Guingona, Natalie Escaler, Monique Wilson, Amanda Layne, Betsy Gala, Victor Consunji, Rudolf Zacharow and Pepper Ter-hankee.

We were introduced to Nokia's six-six 6630 and 3650, two imaging devices that are part of the powerful Nokia N-series. Everyone was swooning over the phones, pahanggan.

"So other mobile phone has state-of-the-art features such as the Carl Zeiss optics for camera lens, the time digital zoom, and a range of capture sizes up to 1mp, such as screen, portrait, night and macro, that result in stunningly clear photos," explained Nokia's Leanne Lim Aldridge.

A distinguished few were handed out (just for that night) the hot, hot Nokia 3650 and 9500, so that they could serve as "official photographers" of the event. Then the photographers of the best photo was given—yes, you guessed it—a brand new Nokia 3650!

All the photos taken were printed by Kodak via Bluetooth printer.

After several deliberations, the winner of the Nokia 3650 was Anton Barreiro of Pineapple, the winning photo was a shot of Laura Zobel.

Two Nokia 9500 hot shots were beaming with pride over the mind-blowingly successful event—Nokia's country marketing manager Purnhart Bhasin, and product manager, Mike Smith.

The entire Metro Society family, headed by the brains behind the magazine banking other publications of ABS-CBN Publishing), Thelma San Juan, was on hand. Also present were Metro Society's Basil Manasseo, Phillip Co Liu Jiang and Mia Borromeo.

Darling in hot-ish was glamorous Vicky Gabriel, Ed Montanez, Miguel Benitez, Shy Gonzaga's Brian Viado and Patrick Reyno enjoyed the drinks. ABS-CBN's young hot couple, Ernie Lopez and Sonia Llamas, were there, as well as Cha Cha Madrigal-Salaque, gorgeous Bianca Valente, super fun Melissa Martel, Erin Ocampo, Jojo Cabarles, and Raquel Lim-yuan, Alanis Katigbak.

There were other guests, of course—all in attempt over Nokia, pahanggan.

MODELS Bobby Manotepal and Valerie de los Santos

MASTERCARD International's Aaron Corre and British Airways' Natalie Puey

HARBOUR Center CEO Mike Romero and Marina Espejo

ANTON Barreiro with his prized Nokia 9500 smartcliar Best Photograph

NIKKI of all seasons Louie Cruz and Annie Regor

LIZZIE Zobel tries out the Nokia N90 with Doris Magsaysay Ho

NOKIA'S Thelma San Juan, Purnhart Bhasin, Ernie Lopez with the Nokia N90 as Sienna Spee takes her 'n Annie Hwang gets a big laugh over it

BUSINESSMAN Honorio Poblador and wife, actress/ex Sandy Castro, with Nokia country general manager Purnhart Bhasin and Maria Mariano

PEPPER Barredoras and Monique Villanueva use the imaging features of Nokia N90.

ACE PHOTOGRAPHERS Jojo Guingona, Pancho Roulier and Victor Consunji

METRO Society's Basil Manasseo with me and Nokia's Leanne Lim

WORLD-CLASS photographer Benjy Tolo with Metro and Mr. Boutique's Mia Borromeo

METRO Society's Thelma San Juan and marketer Bhasin Eala

WITHOUT BATTING AN EYELASH

Mauricio Arcadio

Photos by Alex Van Haagen para Kodak Easyshare

Mall launches own soundtrack

MALL OF ASIA launches the Official Mall of Asia Theme, the first completely original song in a mall, on 10 p.m. today, Jan. 28, at the SM Cafe Ayala Greenbelt. The theme is to be sung live by Jessa Zaragoza and will start at exactly 12 midnight. Stargazette King and Miller Rose will be on hand during the ceremony. DJ Romeo compilation is Ayala Greenbelt's exclusive soundtrack. Shoppers will get one CD for a minimum purchase of P5,000 at Greenbelt exclusive stores. Promo ends Feb. 2.

ACCREDITATION PROGRAM. The De La Salle College of Saint Benilde's School of Hotel, Restaurant and Institution Management (SHRIM) is offering the Supervised Tertiary Education Equivalency and Accreditation Program (STEEAP) for people with no college degree. Books, chefs, executive housekeepers and front desk staff, among others, can now earn UNIVERSITY diplomas of Science in Hotel, Restaurant and Institution Management degrees within their work. The STEEAP is officially recognized by the Commission on Higher Education. It is very suitable for working professionals because of the flexibility. Orientation sessions are held. Call 800-1100, 800-1000, and 5301063 or e-mail shrim@dlsu.edu.ph.

SALE. French clothing line Lulu Castagnette holds its end-of-season sale until Jan. 31. The brand offers up to 70 percent off on jeans, blouses, T-shirts, skirts, shorts, dresses, jackets and outerwear. The Lulu Castagnette Cash 'n' Coupon Sale is ongoing at its branches at 2/F, Glorietta 4 and Rockwell's Power Plant Mall, Rockwell Center.

POST-GRADUATE PROGRAMS. The De La Salle College of Saint Benilde's School of Professional and Continuing Education (SPACE) is offering courses for professionals starting Jan. 28. The modules may be taken separately or as part of a program leading up to a post-graduate diploma. A short course on Technical Sales Negotiations will also be offered. Classes are held 12:00-1:30 p.m. Saturdays at the Angelo King International Center. Exclusive and Authentic Ube, Malate, Manila. Call 800-0376, 5536888 ext. 341-342 or e-mail space@dlsu.edu.ph.

GOINGS ON

REUNION. The Mapúa Institute of Technology High School Class 1984 will hold a reunion on Jan. 29, 6 dinner-dance will be held Jan. 29 at Ramon Philippine Plaza hosted by the United States Canada chapter. Call/ Agnes de Castro (6764215) and Rodolfo Gonzales (894-6605/06).

EXECUTIVE SEMINARS. Cardan Continuum solutions Inc. is offering a new series of Executive English seminars for students, housewives and professionals 2 p.m. Feb. 4 and 5. Call 8928000, 8900000 or 891-8207/19.

PHOTOGRAPHY WORKSHOPS. Photography seminars will be held Feb. 9-10 at the Asian Institute of Management (AIM), Makati. Call 8924011 or 8915400.

WEDDING FAIR. Philippine Exhibits presents a wedding fair, "Mandate ng Pilipinas," Feb. 11-13, at the Activity Area of Market! Market!, Bonifacio Global City, Taguig. Call 8565481/8884.

ALUMNI HOMECOMING. The Automotive School of Mechanics (ASE) and Asian College of Science and Technology (Accet) had an alumni homecoming recently at the Social Gym on Aurora Boulevard. Founder Consuelo Ong was the celebration. Dinner was prepared by the faculty and students of the Hotel and Restaurant Management Department. The event featured performances by Grand alumni and students, including resident alumni/entertainment Ige Villaroy.

TENTH Bernale Bidaya

Lifestyle crowd gets busy this year

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by magnets. I want to retire but I fear I might start looking my age. Don't ask me about this."

Philip Rodriguez: "To expand my HIV to the Ayala Centrio. I'm ecstatic over New Year and endless possibilities, knowing how far I can go as well as my limitations, but with hope in my heart."

Dominic Stanislaus: "Slow down in my 99 [business], travel more. I'm at a point where nothing excites me anymore except perhaps the prospect of good sex."

Marlene Lopez: "To will be another year of hitting the bullet on for on my personal life is concerned. I will start my new year by filling a [position for] commitment."

Marlene Serrano: "I like to do more things I truly enjoy even if it means having to reinvent myself. I am at a point when my life roles as daughter, sister, aunt and friend are most important to me."

Dave de Jesus: "Diet, work out, make Thailand the top destination of Filipinos. I'm in the prime of my life. Life begins at 40something."

Benjie Bolinao: "To carry on the challenging but enjoyable work for 23 years of PR and communication management. Writer Hemmet King says there are four stages in a woman's life. I'm at stage three, between **nerve and dear old dying**, it lasts about 15 years, from 50 to social security, but they are the best 15 years in a woman's life—debutifying years, deconfliction years—when a woman can shed her shit and become, for a brief shining moment, a good ol' girl."

Mike de la Rosa: "To get my BTW online and going live on the web. I have commitment and appreciation for what I'm accomplished, looking ahead to new trends, ideas that will continue to stimulate my creative juices."

Toni Vargas: "I'm turning 30 and I'll like to slow down and be more conscious of my health. I have two smaller children to care for. I will have a lot of goals to fulfill. I'd like to do those with the least stress. I don't have to be filthy rich. I just want to enjoy the good quality of life with my loved ones."

Thelma Brenda Baltazar: "To renovate, expand our home, to pursue Barbie's studies, publish my second children's book. Sun at the crossroads, climbing out of the box, breaking barriers people have set for me."

Jeston Barrytree: "I will make a conscious effort to be self-indulgent, to the past years I've been generous and charitable...not a bad thing, but this time around, I will include myself as one of the top beneficiaries. Travel and art—a perfect way to pamper my spirit."

Tes Duazo: "To come up with more untapped design concepts that would not just give pride but add to Filipino identity ... I am at a happy-but-still-willing-to-reinvent-myself mode. Maybe switch career to 'passion design'?"

Randy Gana: "More than artistic gratification, my work now provides great opportunity to promote not only myself but also the country... when I can finally say I am proudly Filipino and I want the whole world to know why I am proud to be so."

Cesar Limpoc: "To create more lifestyle brands for the international market. I'm in the most exciting time of my career."

To be continued

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LEICA Carpo

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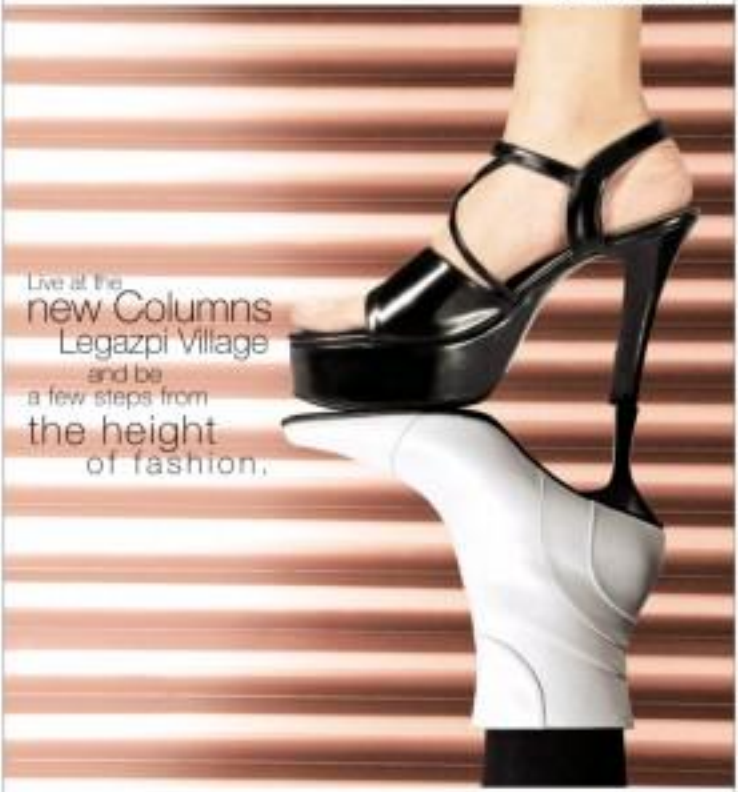

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